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5

6

7

8

9

10

THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Song of the Supreme

Also by T L Vaswani

KRISHNA THE SAVIOUR
KRISHNA'S FLUTE
THE ANCIENT MURLI
MY MASTER
THE DIVINE SPARK
RELIGION AND CULTURE
WISDOM OF THE RISHIS
DIARY OF A DISCIPLE
ATMAGNAN OR LIFE IN THE SPIRIT
THE SECRET OF ASIA
A PILGRIM'S FAITH
THUS HAVE I LEARNT
BUILDERS OF TOMORROW
MY MOTHERLAND
APOSTLES OF FREEDOM
VOICES
SPIRIT OF HINDU CULTURE
BODHI DHARMA
IN THE SIKH SANCTUARY
QUEST (POEMS)
YOUTH AND THE NATION
WITNESS OF THE ANCIENT
AWAKE ! YOUNG INDIA !
THE ARYAN IDEAL
DESERT VOICES
KRISHNA STORIES AND PARABLES
GITA MEDITATIONS
A PROPHET OF THE PEOPLE
THE FACE OF THE BUDDHA
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA
SAINT MIRA
RISHI DAYANAND
TUKARAM POET AND PROPHET
HEART-BEATS (POEMS)
GITA A BIBLE OF HUMANITY
THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS ONES
THE RISHI
KINDLE THE LIGHT
THE GREAT SOULED GANDHI
THE HEART OF THE GITA
GANDHI THE MAN OF THE AGES
THE LIFE BEAUTIFUL
AWAKENERS OF HUMANITY
LITTLE FLOWERS
ALL LIFE IS SACRED
THE BOY IN QUEST OF GOD AND OTHER STORIES
THE CALL OF MIRA EDUCATION
THE BABE OF BRINDAVAN AND OTHER STORIES
MASTERS AND MYSTICS

**THE
BHAGAVAD GITA :**
The Song of the Supreme

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By _

T.L. VASWANI

[Edited by J P VASWANI]

GITA PUBLISHING HOUSE,
10, Sadhu Vaswani Path,
Poona-1, (India)

Published by
Shri Pamo Manchandya,
Gita Publishing House,
10, Sadhu Vaswani Path.
Poona-1, (India)

Price Rs.35.00

US\$ - 6.00

UK £ - 3 00

Photo Typeset & Printed by
VIVEK SACHDEV at
NAVABHARATH PRINTERS AND TRADERS
231, Royapettah High Road
Madras - 600 014

A Bible of Beauty and Thought

The Gita, like other great books, reflects the wisdom of the ages

The Gita has height, has depth and breadth the Gita has, also, the fourth dimension of timelessness

The Gita is a breath of eternity breathed upon the earth !



Once in several centuries visits this planet a man like him who taught the Gita, giving to the ages a message through the singing words of a musician and a poet,— a message of Eternal Love to children of this Earth travailing in suffering and darkness, in tragedy and tears!

Everyone of the 700 *Slokas* in the Gita is radiant with beauty of form

But more enchanting than the beauty of form, as Socrates points out in the *Banquet*, is the beauty of thought The two are blended in the Gita

The Gita is a Bible of beauty and thought

If you read the Gita everyday, you will make your daily life a temple, a sanctuary of the Spirit

And you will bless this beautiful Earth !

—T L VASWANI

Contents

Editor's Note	9
Introduction	16
Prologue	23
On The Battlefield of Life	30
The Loneliness of Arjuna (Chapter 1)	35
The Teaching Begins (Chapter 2)	42
The Path of Action (Chapter 3)	62
The Secret Doctrine (Chapter 4)	68
The Path of Renunciation (Chapter 5)	78
The Path of Meditation (Chapter 6)	85
The Cycle of Manifestation (Chapter 7)	92
The Path of Light (Chapter 8)	103
The Supreme Mystery (Chapter 9)	116
The Divine Universe (Chapter 10)	128
Krishna's Transfiguration (Chapter 11)	136

Contents

Editor's Note	9
Introduction	16
Prologue	23
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The Secret Doctrine (Chapter 4)	68
The Path of Renunciation (Chapter 5)	78
The Path of Meditation (Chapter 6)	85
The Cycle of Manifestation (Chapter 7)	92
The Path of Light (Chapter 8)	103
The Supreme Mystery (Chapter 9)	116
The Divine Universe (Chapter 10)	128
Krishna's Transfiguration (Chapter 11)	136

Editor's Note

He sat underneath a tree His eyes were closed in meditation His face was a picture of peace,— the peace that passeth understanding

I went and sat quietly by his side After sometime, he opened his eyes They were lit up with a strange, mystic light

I asked him — “Who art thou?”

He answered — “A seeker!”

I asked him — “What seekest thou?”

He answered — “The Light!”

There was silence for a few brief moments Then he said — “Is not everyone a seeker? Is not everyone seeking the Light, the Way? Some find it a few follow it,— and attain!”

“Who is the man who has attained?” I asked

He said — “The soul has two eyes one looks inwards the other looks outwards The man of attainment opens the inner eye, and he sees nothing but God!”

The Veda, the Avesta, the Dhammapada, the Bible, the Qur'an, the Bhagavad Gita,— all the sacred scriptures,— call upon us to open the spiritual eye and behold the True, the Good, the Beautiful, the Holy

The Path of Devotion (Chapter 12)	149
Philosophy of Life (Chapter 13)	155
Conquest of the Three Qualities (Chapter 14)	166
The World Tree (Chapter 15)	173
The Divine and the Demoniak (Chapter 16)	181
Three Kinds of Faith (Chapter 17)	192
The Final Word (Chapter 18)	201

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The Veda, the Avesta, the Dhammapada, the Bible, the Qur'an, the Bhagavad Gita,— all the sacred scriptures,— call upon us to open the spiritual eye and behold the True, the Good, the Beautiful, the Holy

The Gita speaks of three ways, three *margas*,— the *karma marga*, the way of selfless action, the *gnana marga*, the way of wisdom, and the *bhakti marga*, the way of devotion. There are many ways the Goal is one! The ways are as many as are the souls of men, because of differences in temperament and mental and spiritual equipment. And the Gita teaches that all the ways lead the seeker to the One Supreme. “On whatever path men approach Me,” says the Lord (Sri Krishna) in the Gita, “on that I go to meet them, for all the paths are Mine, verily Mine!” The Gita is singularly free from sectarianism. “I am in every religion,” says the Lord, “as a thread through a string of pearls.”

The Gita is a world-scripture with a world-message. It is a timeless message. Though the message was delivered five thousand years ago, it has much to teach us, who are children of a later and larger growth, sons and daughters of an excited, agitated age.

The emphasis in the teaching of the Gita is on life, not words. Do not merely chant the *slokas* of the Gita, but bear witness to the great teaching in deeds of daily living. Therefore, live a dedicated life. The model man of the Gita is he who beholds the Light shining in the heart within, but not, on that account withdraws himself from the world. He devotes himself to a life of duty,— the duty of his daily task, the duty he owes to his family, community, country, humanity, the duty he owes to birds and animals, for he realises that birds and animals, too, are man’s younger brothers and sisters in the one Family of Creation. He does his duty in love. he does his work in a spirit of detachment. Love must be blended with detachment. For naked must the swimmer dive into the sea to find the pearl. He who would find the “pearl of great price” should live in the world, stripping himself of all attachment. Beautiful are the words of a Sufi singer —

Penance and pilgrimage,
Fasting and rituals,
Learning and scholarship,
Avail little!
The Goal is attained
When the two streams

Of love and renunciation

Mingle, flowing together into the sea!

From the mingling of love and renunciation arises inward light
It leads the seeker on!

Today, a number of "spiritual teachers", alike in India and outside, tell their disciples that for God-realisation, renunciation is not necessary. It is like telling them that they can eat their cake and have it too.

We must not forget that God is a "jealous God". He must have all our attention. So Jesus said — "You cannot serve two Masters." Without renunciation there can be no spiritual progress. True renunciation is inner. You are not asked to renounce the world and dwell in the depths of a *tapobana*, a forest of meditation, or on the peak of a hill. Live in the world but be attached to no form, no finite thing. Live in a spirit of detachment, knowing that no one, nothing belongs to you, that you belong to God. Do your daily work, attend to your daily tasks, but do not forget God for a single moment. "Love God and do what you like," said St. Augustine. And it was a Sufi mystic who said — "The true saint goes in and out amongst the people and eats and sleeps with them and buys and sells in the market and marries and takes part in social intercourse, and never forgets God for a single moment."

To Maharishi Raman there came a seeker who said — "I desire to live in solitude where I can find all I want with ease, so that I may devote all my time to meditation. Is such a desire good or bad?" The Maharishi answered — "Such thoughts will bestow a *janma* (re-incarnation) for their fulfilment. What does it matter where and how you are placed? The essential point is that the mind must always remain in its source. There is nothing external which is not also internal. The mind is all. If the mind is active, even solitude becomes like a market-place. There is no use closing your eyes. Close the mental eye and all will be right."

True renunciation is "closing the mental eye." It is an inner attitude of the mind. Raja Janaka lived in a palace but regarded nothing as his own. He was a man of true renunciation. To him came, one day, a *sanyasin* who outwardly had renounced the world and put on an ochre robe. Seeing Janaka surrounded by

pomp and grandeur, the *sanyasin* thought to himself — “How could this man living, as he does, in the midst of luxury, have attained to God?”

Just then was heard a cry — “The palace is on fire!” Immediately, the *sanyasin* ran out to save his loin-cloth which he had washed and hung on a rope to dry. When he returned, he was astonished to find Janaka sitting there unconcerned.

The *sanyasin* said — “O king, did you not hear that the palace was on fire? How is it, then, that you sit here as though nothing has happened?”

Raja Janaka quietly answered — “What is mine is with me it cannot be burnt by any outer conflagration ”

Raja Janaka was a man of true renunciation True renunciation is detachment from (1) things, (2) forms, and (3) one's own self The great German mystic, Meister Eckhart, said — “Whoso has three things is beloved of God The first is riddance of goods, the second of friends, and the third is riddance of self ”

The man of renunciation, having rid himself of “self”, lives for others His heart flows in a ceaseless stream of sympathy to the poor and broken ones, to the forsaken and forlorn, to birds and animals He lives to serve, beholding his own Self in those he seeks to serve Of such a one, Sri Krishna says in the Gita — “He is the supreme yogi to whom the pleasure or pain of others is his own pleasure and pain ”

Thus lived Beloved Dada (Sri T L Vaswani) till the last day of his earthly life He was the very picture of renunciation Having renounced all, he announced the Eternal. And he looked on all as his own self He regarded nothing in this world as being separate from him and endeavoured to bring joy into the lives of those that came to him for help and healing and wholeness Their happiness was his happiness their sorrows were his sorrows Every creature was, to him, an image of the King of Beauty

One morning, Beloved Dada spoke to us of the teaching of the Gita concerning the *Atman*, the Spirit. The true man is the *Atman*, he said, not the body And the *Atman* cannot be destroyed Death is an experience not of the *Atman*, but of the

body The *Atman* is deathless, indestructible, eternal It is the body that dies it is the form that perishes The *Atman* ever lives So be not afraid of death, nor grieve over the passing away of your dear ones

This teaching Beloved Dada gave us in the morning In the course of the day, he was called to the side of a mother who was disconsolate with grief Her only son had died in an air-crash She wept unending tears of sorrow As Beloved Dada met her, he too shed tears Later, we put to him the question — “This morning you taught us that we must not grieve over the passing away of our dear ones, for there is no death Our dear ones live in the Life Undying How is it, then, that you shed tears as you sat in the presence of the bereaved mother?”

Beloved Dada answered — “As I sat by the side of the mother, I felt *I* was the mother!”

Such was the secret of Beloved Dada’s life,— identification with others The others were not apart from him they were a part of him The pleasure or pain of others was his own pleasure or pain He was the “supreme yogi” of the Gita

For years together, Beloved Dada, through precept and example, interpreted the teaching of the Gita and meditated on its sublime thought He became one with the Gita To many of us, indeed, he was a living Gita On meeting him, people exclaimed — “Here is an embodiment of the Gita”

Beloved Dada spoke on the Gita and he wrote much on the Gita I have with me heaps of his manuscripts, not yet published From them, I have prepared an “Outline of the Gita”, in simple words, so that the great teaching of the Gita may be easily understood Some mistakes must inevitably have crept in they are my mistakes And I seek refuge in the thought that I am not a scholar, and that the Master accepts the broken offerings of a loving heart

The Gita, the Song of the Lord, is essentially a Song of Life It shows how man (the *jiva*),— who lives a life of separation,— may be united with the Source Man has been separated from the Eternal in whom is his Home hence his restlessness There is restlessness in all our work,— even in our so-called “service” Therefore, our service does not bless it is a source of bondage

"Can the sound of the word 'service' deceive the Lord?" asked Maharishi Raman "Does He not know? Is He waiting for these people's service?" And Swami Sivananda said — "God does not want precious presents Many people spend millions of rupees in opening hospitals and feeding-houses But they do not give their hearts " Travelling across the centuries comes the word of the Lord —

This be my word Supreme to Thee,
 O Arjuna!
 Let go the rites and writ duties
 Come to Me for single refuge!
 Bring thy heart to Me!
 Fix thy thoughts on Me!
 Serve Me! Worship Me!
 Cling in faith and love and reverence to Me!
 So shalt thou come to Me!
 And I shall free thee
 From the bondage of sin!

Walking the way of "loving surrender", man may reach God and be one with Him Today, he lives in separation Why was he separated? When was he separated? How was he separated? Who knows? Who can tell? But there is a path which man may take to retrace his steps back to the Homeland, where is his true Peace And the Gita speaks to us of this Path, this Way The Way is to be trodden not spoken about Step by step, must man move on the Path, until the wanderer reaches his Home

Three important words need to be noted The first is the *Atman*, the Spirit, our true Home The second is *Prakriti*, the cosmos, in which we find ourselves And the third is *Yoga*, the way walking which the *jiva* may return to the true Homeland

The *jiva* is in exile here We all are in exile Our Home is elsewhere and this Home is calling us Our Home is the Spirit,— the *Atman* of the Gita, the "Kingdom of Heavens" of Jesus Coming into this world of name and form, entering into the dimensions of space and time, the *jiva* has got entangled There is the play between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, says the Gita And the play goes on! The *jiva* has got entangled in this play How may the *jiva* get out of it to reach his Home? How? By *Yoga*, says the

Gita The Gita is a text-book of *Yoga* "Yoga" literally means "union" It is the way of union, re-union, the way which we may tread to be re-united with the Source This way is interpreted in the following pages

The Gita has an answer to the problems and perplexities of the modern world The problem of social, national and international reconstruction will not be solved without an appreciation of those deeper values of life which, the Gita shows, are the very structure of Reality A new Indian nation, a new social order, a new civilisation must be built on the essential teachings of the Gita. The wisdom of the Gita is the hope of a new humanity.

J P VASWANI

Introduction

The Gita is a section of the *Mahabharata*,— a portion of the *Bhishma Parva* (chapters 25 to 42) In these eighteen chapters is recorded the “Dialogue” (*samvada*) between Sri Krishna and Arjuna The *Vedas* the *Upanishads*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* the *Gita* and the *Prahma Sutras* reflect the soul of the Aryan people The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are the two great Epics which enshrine India’s heroic memories, as the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras* enshrine India’s philosophy and religion Yagnavalkya and Yudhisthira, Arjuna and Bhishma Pitamaha bear witness to India’s ancient ideals

Krishna’s is a consecrated name in the life and literature of Aryavarta In the wilderness of modern India, Sri Krishna’s name rises as a pillar of light and bears witness to the divine destiny of man Krishna teaches in the Gita that the way to the fulfilment of man’s destiny is the way of pure, heroic will Renounce self-love, the little ego! Live for the *Atman*, the Eternal, in you! This is the message of the Gita Century after century has this message been proclaimed by India’s great ones And the thrilling tale of Krishna, the Awakener of Arjuna,— of

Krishna, the Teacher of *Dharma* or Righteousness,— of Krishna, the Revealer of Wisdom,— will remind generations unborn of the Mystery of Life,— the Mystery of the *Atman*

The Gita is, to my mind, India's richest gift to humanity The intuitions of the Gita have shaped the course of Hindu life more than the political methods of great men who have influenced India through the centuries of her long history

The centre-point of the Gita is the *Atman* Thou art of the *Atman*, O son of man! *Tat twamasi!* Thou art a Ray Divine. The greatest of the German poets,— Goethe,— well exclaimed —

Soul of man!
How thou dost seem
Like the water!
From Heaven it cometh
To Heaven it ascends

India's saint and seer, Ramakrishna, when asked to indicate the essence of the Gita, said the essence was in the one word,— renunciation The world is infected with untruth, injustice, suffering, sin What can heal the world? Renunciation The Krishna-man strips himself of all he has, in order to serve and heal humanity

The Gita's teaching is set in the midst of a great Battle In this teaching, Krishna unifies the *margas*, the ways, of different Teachers to the Goal of Life Men come by diverse ways to the Goal,— says the Gita The Gita may rightly be called a scripture of synthesis

In the *karma-yoga* way, the Gita emphasises Will and asks that Will should surrender itself to the Lord The world is Will,— said Schopenhauer He was influenced by Hindu thought Work, action, has its value The highest work is sacrificial work, is *yagna*,— says the Gita Krishna repeatedly asks Arjuna to work and be desireless All work must be an offering to the Lord The *yogi* of the Gita is detached and serene, yet devoted to the Lord And he is truly blessed who, in work and aspiration, in knowledge and *yagna*, enters into union with Krishna,— the Saviour So does the teaching of the Gita flower into love of Krishna

The *Atman* comes from a Realm of Light,— from a Kingdom where there is no time, no birth, no death. The *Atman* comes to a world where there is *maya*, the appearance of separation. Herein lies the magnetism of the Gita—it takes you from the empirical plane of experience to a Realm where, rising above the senses, the mind, and the understanding, you are absorbed in the Supreme. The method of union with the Supreme is called *yoga*.

Worship God by your work,— is Gita's call to the modern world. And your work, *karma* is defined by your *ashrama*. Four *ashramas* are referred to in the Gita—for four types of men are necessary for the building up of society. There is the teacher type and there is the warrior type, there is the wealth-producer type and there is the labourer type. These four types must co-operate to build society. India has for centuries ignored the *kshatriya* type, and India is becoming weaker and weaker. everyday. Europe, again, is dominated by war-lords and, in drunken insanity, moves from violence to violence. What a reckless squandering of the youths of Europe! Europe is in ruins and India is in exhaustion.

Is it wrong to say that both Europe and India have trampled upon idealistic forces? In India, not Krishna but "communism" is, today, in the hearts of the "educated". In Europe, the "State" is deified. Modern "nationalisms" put the state above spiritual ideals. Leningrad boasts of its "anti-religious museum". The great cities of India talk more of Marx and Lenin than of Krishna. Many a "modern" girl in beloved Bharata repeats the words of the young woman of the West who said — "We don't believe in God!"

The Gita rightly emphasises the value of work and social service. There are elements in the life of Russia which I regard as true,— as, indeed, there are forms of "materialism" which, I believe, are not incompatible with a spiritual outlook on life. The great seers of India recognised the place of *artha* (matter, wealth) in social and national life. But they urged that economic and social relations must be seen in the light of spiritual ideals.

There are elements in the prison system of the Soviet which the Hindu theory of life would approve of. Prisons without

walls, where the prisoners are taught work and are treated as men, are superior to prisons in India which are not yet controlled by a spirit of humanism. But the Gita would ask that the prisoners be taught, also, to be the children of God. The Gita would approve of the school system of the Soviet, where children are looked after and given a free meal, but would urge that they be taught, also, that there is a Kingdom of the Spirit that endures when the kingdoms of the earth crumble to dust. The Gita would approve of the Soviet social order which has, practically, abolished hunger and has no room for parasites,—men who live on others without toil or work,—but the Gita would urge that men and women be given an atmosphere wherein they may move and grow in the love of God and the love of man and bird and beast.

The Gita repudiates the communist teaching that violence and hatred must be freely used. The Gita's message is that of a spiritual society that would work on a deeper plane than that of political power or economic interest. Make your daily work an offering to the Lord,— says the Gita.

The ideal of ancient Aryan policy was not exploitation or domination, but service. The modern West, alas! sets up the state as the absolute. State worship is the essence of western nationalisms, as it is the key to communist internationalism and state worship means, practically, obedience to behests of the party in power. The ancient Aryan had no dreams of world-domination. For *Satyam*, Truth, does not dominate. Truth does not coerce. Truth convinces. Truth penetrates from within. Truth seeks not power but the service of love.

Domination, exploitation, conquest! So doth the West wander from violence to violence. So has man in the West proved a "wolf to man." And the vision of Christ is wandering homeless in the West. Her "nationalisms" and "inter-nationalisms" are aggressive, violent. The creed of force is the dominant creed of modern Europe and Europe is drifting from chaos to chaos.

India never went upon foreign conquests. Sri Rama dethroned Ravana, in Lanka, but restored Lanka to the people, setting on its throne a good, able man of that island. India aimed

at a conquest of culture, not of arms India believed in truth and *mautreyi*

One of the most impressive pictures in the *Mahabharata* is that of Bhishma on his bed of arrows on the eve of his departure Bhishma, the *brahmachari*, the man of peerless purity,— Bhishma, the man of wisdom and valour,— Bhishma, the sage who renounces his claim to his father's throne,— Bhishma is dying. This great hero is not afraid of death. To him comes Yudhishthira he serves Bhishma Bhishma is well pleased with Yudhishthira . and Bhishma gives to Yudhishthira a philosophy of life in significant words "Yudhishthira!" says Bhishma, "strive for victory! And never forget that victory must be won through *dharma* Yudhishthira! never depart from *dharma*!"

In the Gita you have, in the very opening *sloka*, the word — "*dharmakshetra*" The battlefield of Kurukshetra is referred to as *dharmakshetra* Yes,— the master-word of the Gita is *dharma* And the teaching of Bhishma, the elder statesman of Aryavarta, is victory through *dharma* The Gita tells us what should be done to attain to victory through *dharma* What is *dharma*? Righteousness The Gita gives the great message of righteousness Plato,— himself a *rishi*, a seer of Greece,— points out in his *Dialogues* that the basis of the state should be "justice"

So the note sounds clear and strong in the Gita — "Let the *Atman* awake!" Many of us have fallen asleep How deep is our slumber of the senses! Awake, Arjuna! Let the *Atman* within you wake! The Gita enunciates the supreme worth of the *Atman*

The machine will not save society the *Atman* will The Gita enunciates the principle of self-reverence Concentrate on the *Atman*, on self-realisation Build up from within Prof Jung rightly said — "The only way of doing good to the world is to do good to oneself" Concentrate on the *Atman*,—on self-realisation,— until, like a grain of mustard-seed, you become a tree of shelter for those who are around you The *Atman*, the Spirit, not a state-machine, will give the world the New Order it seeks

If India lies broken still, is it not because we do not *live* the Gita in daily life? I plead for applied religion, applied

education, applied spirituality We talk of many things We talk of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, of *Brahman* and the *devas*, of *jiva* and the *Atman* We talk of the three *gunas*, of *yagna* and *tapas* and *dana* We talk we discuss what do we *do* in daily life? How many are trying to practise the Gita in daily life? Religion, alas! has been confounded with ritualism And we are building marble temples for marble *thakurs*, forgetting the living, moving *thakurs*,— the poor ones and helpless creatures we slay A thousand schools and colleges, a thousand debates in the Assemblies and at Conferences are, I submit, no better than a tower of babel, a house of confusion and chaos, if we do not live the Gita And to live is to love

The Gita does not accept the dominant theories of collective life which the West has emphasised,— theories of “imperialism”, “nationalism”, “Bolshevism” The Gita teaches that true democracy is of the Spirit The Gita is inspired by a vision of the One Life, in all “I am seated in the hearts of all,” says Sri Krishna And again — “There dwelleth in the heart of every one, O Arjuna! the One who causeth all things and all creatures to revolve, mounted upon the wheel of time In the *Atman*,— the Spirit,— take shelter thou, O son of Bharata! By His Grace thou wilt obtain *Brahma Nirvana*, the Peace Eternal ”

Arjuna! awake to the One Life that floweth into all! If I have in my heart even a little of this perception, how can I hate a brother or a sister, a nation or a race? The One Life flows into you and me,— flows from every star and stardust No moon is cold no sun is dead From all things streams out the joy of life and Krishna’s smile is at the heart of the strife of things! Within you is the One Spirit outside of you is still the One The Kingdom Divine is within you,— is, also, outside you each heart is holy The mystics call it the “Heavenly Heart” The disciples of Confucius called it the “centre of emptiness”, the “Light that is the Master” The universe is holy!

An ancient document has been recently discovered in Upper Egypt The document contains a number of “New Sayings” of Jesus One of them is —

Jesus said — If those who lead you, say to you Behold! the Kingdom is in Heaven, then the birds of Heaven will precede

you'

If they say to you that it is in the sea, then the fish will precede you!

But the Kingdom is within you and the Kingdom is outside of you

This "New Saying" of Jesus sounds the central note of the Gita — "Seated am I in the heart of each And the One *Atman* is in the universe around you' Who sees the Lord in every creature, deathlessly dwelling amid the mortal, he truly sees!"

Krishna calls upon Arjuna to act, but in this vision of the One Self in all Stand up, O Arjuna! says Krishna Stand up and fight as a knight of the *Atman* that is Eternal!

Verily, he who acts thus is truly wise He acts yet hath no desire for "fruits" of action He acts yet is not imprisoned in action's chain He acts yet is free Having conquered desire, he needs nothing "Thou, Krishna! Thou art my All! And having Thee, I need not anything!" he says Such a man acts and rises beyond action to the Eternal He acts but lusteth not after anything He acts yet calleth not anything as his own He acts but is not bound He acts but is free Broken are his bonds Illumined is his heart His life becomes a mirror which reflects the One Supreme

This message gave the Lord, five thousand years ago This message was re-worded by Shankara,— the Teacher of Reality,— in the eighth century, when India's need was piteous This message may yet save modern civilisation For I hold that Krishna's life and teaching are not for India alone they are for the world And centuries may well meet at the Lotus-feet of him who emptied himself of his glory and played with the little ones, and loved cows and birds, and loved the forlorn and forsaken ones, the sinner and the lost, and loved, too, each lotus of the lake and each lily of the field

T L VASWANI

Prologue

The Gita is only a portion, a fragment, of the great Epic, the *Mahabharata*. But this fragment is worth its weight in gold.

Vyasa, the singer of the *Mahabharata*, is a poet of action. The whole Epic is charged with a lofty idealism and has several pictures of exquisite beauty. There are passages inspired by thoughts of *gnana* (wisdom), *dhyana*, (meditation) and *karma* (action), radiant with purity and self-dedication. There are beautiful thoughts, too, on the ideal of the family life and of the disciplines which tell us of the way to “cut at the root of the Tree of Desires”.

In the centre of this Epic stands the Gita,— the Song of Life,— as uttered on the Battlefield named the Kurukshetra. There is idealism in the Song. Its secret is enshrined in the opening word of the Gita,— *Dharmakshetra*, the field of *Dharma*, Righteousness.

When Thomas Paine wrote his famous book, he called it *The Rights of Man*. When, many years later, the Italian patriot and prophet, Mazzini, wrote his famous book, he called it *The Duties of Man*. *Dharma* is a synthesis of “duties”. The world-wars in

Europe, we were told by their advocates, were wars for the "rights" of nations. How often has it not happened that nations have won their "rights" only to exploit them for their own advantage? Where today, are heroic idealists in Western politics? Where, in the ranks of Europe's fighters and soldiers, are men with a vision of *dharma*, a vision of the "duties" of man? Duty to humanity,— and to all creatures,— is the secret of *dharma*. Are not the "Great Nations" of the world victims, today, to a creed of "power"?

Over a generation ago, Count Okura, reviewing the national life of Japan, deplored that it lacked a spiritual basis. Education in Japan, he pointed out, urged patriotism but did not build it in a spiritual motive. It was a great man of Japan, the President of the Imperial University of Kyoto, who said — "Religion is an atmosphere to live in, but Japan lamentably lacks in this atmosphere."

Will victory in terms of the "rights" of this nation or that help the world? Such a victory may only sow the seed of another war. Among the warring nations, in East and West, is there one that fights beneath the Flag of Humanity?

The *Bhagavad Gita*, I regard, as a Scripture of *shakti*,— dynamic life,— not a manual of theology. The *Gita* enshrines the wisdom of India. Many years ago, I called the *Gita* a Canticle of Action.

The form of the *Gita* is that of a *samvada*, a "dialogue." The *Gita* is a "dialogue" between Sri Krishna and Arjuna (*Krishna Arjuna samvada*). Sri Krishna is the Master. Arjuna is his disciple. The *Gita* opens when the blind king, Dhritarashtra, is being given a report of how events are progressing.

The father of Arjuna and the other four Pandava brothers was Pandu. His brother was Dhritarashtra who was blind. So Pandu was made the ruler of the kingdom. Pandu died and, though Dhritarashtra was the king, the kingdom was really ruled by his son, Duryodhana. He was jealous of the Pandavas, his cousins. He refused to give them their heritage. He succeeded by treachery in banishing the Pandavas to the Forest,— for twelve long years. When they returned, they still were anxious for peace. They only asked for five small villages, one for each

brother Duryodhana stoutly refused And each side prepared for war.

Let us not forget that Krishna was anxious for peace and he was full of compassion He said to Yudhishthira, Arjuna and the other Pandava brothers — “Let us strive for peace! Let us do our best to see that war is not waged For war is destruction!”

And the five Pandavas said — “Master! we agree We want peace!”

Then said Krishna — “Let me go to the court of the Kauravas And let me plead with them the cause of peace!”

To Hastinapur Krishna went on behalf of the Pandavas as an ambassador of peace He met the father of the Kauravas,— the blind, old king, Dhritarashtra Dhritarashtra was not vicious he was not wicked But there is something worse, perhaps, than vice it is weakness And over and over again, the Lord in the Gita peals this message — “Arjuna! wake up thy will-power!” Dhritarashtra’s will-power was weak

Krishna arrived at Hastinapur at a time when a council of war was sitting there Krishna prayed for divine help in his mission of peace, and stood up to address the assembly Krishna said —

“Mighty king! Noble Dhritarashtra! I come as an ambassador of peace I bring a message of peace and love I come to vindicate the Law of Brotherhood, Sympathy and Love I ask thee, mighty king! to remember that the Pandavas, too, are, like the Kauravas, thy sons Wilt thou not be generous in thy attitude towards the Pandavas? The great ones of Bharata have been far-famed for wisdom, virtue and sympathy Thou, O mighty king! art the father of thy people I would not see thy name sullied by the sin of injustice and cruel wrong!

“Noble Dhritarashtra! thy sons, the Kauravas, refuse to give their kinsmen even a portion of the land which belongs to them

“Mighty monarch! ill fares the land where injustice is inflicted upon the people If justice is denied to the Pandavas, a civil war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas is sure to break out

“Noble Dhritarashtra! if the impending war is not averted, the Aryan race will be bled to death Thou lovest, I know, the ancient Aryan race Then restrain thy restless sons,— the

Kauravas It is not yet too late I promise to pull the sons of Pandu to the paths of peace It is for thee to control thy sons and make them obey thee in this hour of Bharata's crisis

"Brave is Duryodhana, and Yudhishthira is a lover of righteousness Let each rule his kingdom. And if the two are at peace, both will prosper If the Pandavas and the Kauravas stand united and guard this great land of Bharata, who can prevail against this Ancient Land? Think of the heroes you have in the two camps! Bhishma is unconquerable Drona is a mighty leader Karna is an unmatched archer Kripa is unequalled in valour Bhima is terrible to face in fight Yudhishthira is a lover of *dharma* (righteousness) Arjuna is matchless If all stand united, this land of Bharata will shine as the first in all the world If all stand united, a race of heroes will vindicate the heritage of the holy *rishis*

"But if peace, O mighty king! is spurned, these ancient walls will echo the wails of widows Canst thou bear to see the sons of Pandu slain? They are dear to thee, and thy heart will be sad

"Reflect, thou man of many winters! Reflect on the love thou hast given to the five Pandavas ever since their father left his throne Take them back into thy bosom Be a father to them once more They have charged me to give thee their message They say — 'For years we lived like orphans in the night At last, the radiant dawn awoke Be to us this day, too,— in our need,— a father! Help us, for we faint!'

"Noble Dhritarashtra! Krishna pleads for peace Krishna prays for blessings on you all! Lead not thy people to slaughter! Slay not thy kinsmen! Keep peace and depart not from *dharma*, righteousness Thou hast not many years on earth Let thy closing years be clean and free from blood and sin "

Dhritarashtra sighed heavily his eyes were filled with tears He said — "I want peace"

Then stood up in the court one whom all revered,— Bhishma, the elder statesman, Bhishma, the *brahmachari* He stood up and said — "O king! I, too, want peace Listen to these loving words of mine I trained Arjuna there is not his equal among the warriors Krishna and Arjuna are resistless Listen not to Duryodhana, O king! Follow your own heart. In the heart of

him who is pure is the throne of the King of kings."

Then stood up another,— Drona They called him Drona Acharya, the mighty archer, the great Guru,— he who taught Arjuna archery Drona Acharya, the preceptor, stood up and said — "I, too, want peace!"

The situation looked hopeful, helpful It looked as though there was going to be peace, at last, between the Pandavas and the Kauravas But history shows how, again and again, a single man may disturb the destiny of a whole nation

Dhritarashtra spake — "Duryodhana, my beloved son! end this strife! Do not cast a black shadow of death and sorrow on the last years of your aged father Simple is the heart of Krishna Wise is his counsel Resist it not! Be reconciled to Yudhishthira Let the Kauravas and the Pandavas be strengthened in bonds of peace and love!"

Dhritarashtra, "the holder of the kingdom", the blind, old king, had decided to give his throne to Yudhishthira,— the Dharmaraja, the eldest brother of the Pandavas But Duryodhana, the eldest son of the Kuru king, by tricks and treachery, secured the throne for himself

Alas! Duryodhana, the strong-willed son of Dhritarashtra, was the real *raja* He wanted power, authority, kingdom He was anxious to deprive the Pandavas of their territory And Dhritarashtra had great *moha* for his son Duryodhana led him by the nose Duryodhana rose up in anger and spake to Krishna thus — "Chief of Dwarka! You hate me, I know and you secretly love the Pandavas But I shall not bow the knee to the Pandavas We are so many The Pandavas and their friends are very few But even if I lose, dying on the battlefield, I have no fear for the golden gates of *swarga-loka* (Heaven) are open to him who dies bravely fighting on the battlefield Indraprastha will never be Yudhishthira's again My father shall be the king of undivided Bharata "

Sri Krishna, with his golden tongue, pleaded again for peace Sri Krishna argued eloquently, and towards the end he said — "The Pandavas will be content if you give them just five villages "

But Duryodhana budged not an inch Duryodhana was adamant as steel He said — “I shall give the Pandavas not even the point of a pin,— the space of a single needle ”

And Duryodhana plotted to seize Krishna himself Duryodhana failed Duryodhana was a man of the “mind”, not of the spirit The mind weighs and measures, contrives and conspires the spirit sees and speaks out of the heart

Sri Krishna bowed to the court His peace-mission had failed! He returned and related to the Pandavas the whole story in brief And when Arjuna heard it, he was excited, and he said to Sri Krishna — “Master! now I shall fight, and I shall not fail!” Both sides prepared for the coming struggle

Sri Krishna returned to Dwarka Duryodhana went there to ask for Krishna’s help Arjuna, too, reached Dwarka the same day Both found Krishna asleep Duryodhana sat down on a costly carpet in Krishna’s room Arjuna, with folded hands, stood in humility at Krishna’s feet and in front of him On waking up, Krishna saw Arjuna before him and then, on turning his head, saw Duryodhana in the same room, sitting on the carpet Krishna greeted both and asked them what had brought them there

Duryodhana said — “You, Krishna, love us both and we both are your friends But of the two, I came to you first And a good man gives help to him who cometh first I have the first claim, therefore, on you!”

Sri Krishna said — “Yes Duryodhana, you came first But I saw Arjuna first I would help you both The *shastras* (scriptures) declare that the wishes of those who are younger in age should be respected first So, let Arjuna’s wish be first fulfilled My help can be of two kinds One will be that of my army,— the ‘Narayana Sena’ The other help will be my own self And I shall not fight I shall use no weapons of war Let Arjuna ask what help he wants Arjuna, do you want my army or do you want myself?”

Arjuna said — “Master, I want you!”

Duryodhana said quickly — “Krishna, I want your army ”

And Krishna said to Duryodhana — “Have my army! Lead it

to the battlefield It will fight on the Kaurava side!"

Duryodhana left for Hastinapur, happy with Krishna's army! Then Krishna asked Arjuna — "You know I shall not fight Why did you accept me and not choose my army?"

Arjuna said — "Master! there has been a longing in my heart that you may drive my chariot and in the coming battle, I look up to you, Master, to fulfil this longing "

Krishna, the Compassionate One, accepted the task of driving the chariot Krishna became the *sarathi* on the battlefield and, at the very commencement of the battle, gave the divine teaching of the Gita

The Kurukshetra War was, perhaps, inevitable but it was tragic! Every war is tragic What a terrible battle was fought! At the end of it, the Kuru family was destroyed and the *kshatrya* community was annihilated The five Pandavas survived, but their kinsmen, the Kauravas, were slaughtered

Kurukshetra,— in the neighbourhood of modern Delhi,—was the scene of the great battle. Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata*, gives to his son, Suka, the gist of the whole Epic in significant words Vyasa says — "With uplifted arms I announce — Never should one, in desire for enjoyment or in fear or covetousness, give up *dharma* (practice of virtue),— not even for the sake of one's life *Dharma* is eternal pain and pleasure are passing "

The thought of Kurukshetra, I confess, makes me sad Has there been an all-India union since the Kurukshetra War? India has been, since that fatal day, disunited Ashoka, it is true, built up, in the third century B C., an Indian empire And in the fourth and fifth centuries B C., the Guptas built up an empire But these "empires" passed away India lost her national homogeneity and her political harmony India's *kshatrya* class perished on the Kuru field and India was exposed to foreign invasions For centuries has India's national *karma* yoked India to the stripes of subjection O, why did they fight, the Kauravas and the Pandavas? Why did they not have peace? The answer is in the one word destiny Fates overpowered the vision of the *rishis* Strange are the ways of *karma* India crumbled to her fall

On The Battlefield Of Life

Sometimes, studying the Gita, in hours of silence I have felt as though I were in a temple listening to temple-bells, ringing with voices, wonderful voices. The first is expressed in the words, "*Uttishta! Paramtapa!*" "Stand up, O Arjuna!" Every one of us is an image of Arjuna. And so, to every one of us comes the voice of the Gita — "*Uttishta!*" "Stand up!" What for?

The Gita calls us to noble tasks of manhood. There are wrongs to be righted. There are evils within us and evils outside us. Current education, in our country, has gone astray, just because it has neglected to develop manhood. I wished the Gita were an integral part of the education given to students in schools and colleges. Arjuna, as we shall see in chapter one of the Gita, feels despondent and says to Sri Krishna — "Master! I cannot fight!" To despondent Arjuna, the Master says — "*Uttishta!*" "Stand up!" Life is a battlefield.

I look around me and ask — "Where are Arjunas, today, manly men, warriors of the Spirit?" Soft men I find in plenty in our schools and colleges. But to listen to the Gita is to know that soft living is wrong living.

"Seek wisdom, O Arjuna!" says Krishna to his disciple Arjuna.

asks what is wisdom Sri Krishna points out that wisdom is "conquest" In ancient India, the ideal to which schools and colleges bore witness was — "Live heroically!" For true wisdom is conquest Wisdom is for those who would be heroes in the field of life And when Arjuna asks — "Master! let me understand how wisdom is achieved," Sri Krishna says — "My child! conquer your desires "

How often is there not a conflict between "desire" and the "good"! Do I satisfy my desire? I suffer I experience pain I suffer, again and again, until there dawns upon me the thought that I must keep clear of "craving" for pleasure I find that after pleasure cometh pain I begin to understand that in pleasure is the seed of pain So I build up my moral muscles, and I learn that I must conquer desires

"Master! tell me," Arjuna asks, "how desires may be conquered "

And Krishna says — "To conquer desires, take care of the instruments of the *Atman* "

"What are they?" asks Arjuna

And the Master says — "The first instrument is the physical body, the *sthula sarira* "

Take care of the body Keep the body pure The eyes, the ears, all the *indriyas*,— the senses,— must be kept pure

Another instrument is the inner body, the subtle body, the body of desire Desire or *trishna* must be kept under control

There is another body, too,— the mind, the *manas* The mind is as a monkey The mind wanders hither and thither The mind must learn concentration Arjuna! learn to control the monkey-mind !

Then, there is the instrument of the *Atman* called the *buddhi*, will-power Arjuna! see that your will-power is strong and pure The world's piteous need, today, is of men who have strong wills and pure wills,— wills dedicated to the service of humanity, of all creatures, *lokasangraha*, the welfare of the people

When these "instruments" are well trained, you attain, gradually, to what the Gita calls *Brahma Nirvana*,— the peace that passeth understanding An artist has painted the picture of

a roaring waterfall descending and near the waterfall is a tree on which sits a bird, singing The roaring waterfall is the world, and near it is the Tree of Wisdom on which the *Atman*-bird sits,—singing

The ideal of heroic living was rightly emphasised in the *ashramas* of India. Over and over again, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna — “Be a hero in the fight! Live heroically!” And in the culture-centres of ancient India, the teaching was given to students — “Live heroically! Learn self-control! Restrain your desires! Be pure! Be creative!”

The first section of the Gita dwells, with the insight of a seer, on the ideal of *karma-yoga*. To my mind, it is not a little significant that a copy of the Gita may be found, even today, in the hands of almost every *sanyasin* in India. The true *sanyasin* accepts the *yoga* of action in his daily life.

The teaching of Krishna, like that of Jesus, calls us to life of blended action and contemplation. Both lead to the highest bliss, says the Gita. But of the two, *yoga* through action is regarded more than renunciation (*sanyasa*) of action. The Gita emphasises the value of both activity and withdrawal,—for the true *jignasu*, aspirant, on the path. The two are not contradictory but complementary. Wisely affirms the Gita — “Children speak of these two paths as distinct. He who is rightly devoted to even one obtains the fruits of both.”

He is a sage, indeed, who is a master of both,— the inner and the outer. Krishna, like Jesus, puts emphasis on the blended life of action and contemplation. Activity? Yes,— but, also, withdrawal. Withdrawal? Yes,— but, also, activity. Withdrawal into the soul, meditation in the heart within. Krishna calls upon Arjuna to stand bravely on the battlefield. Yes,— but Krishna also asks Arjuna to withdraw within and meet the Lord in the heart. Withdraw,— yes — but why need you withdraw to a mountain or a forest? Withdraw within your heart, and greet your God!

Act! Act! Act! Yes,— is not activity inevitable? Can you eliminate all activity,— all bodily and all mental activity? Act you must, O Arjuna! Only see that you act in right understanding, and see that you act in detachment. Only see

that you do not seek any reward of action. Fling aside all fruits of action. Offer your work as worship, *yagna*, sacrifice, to the Lord. The words of Sri Krishna are significant. "Renounce," he says, "all action in Me!" Hand your life over to the Highest. How often have I not meditated on the words of Krishna to Arjuna —

Thy business is the deed alone, O knight!
And never with what return the deed may yield!
Let right deed be thy motive, not the fruit
Do right for the sake of right so live in deed!
Do thou the deed with thy heart fixed on the Lord
Renounce attachment to the fruit so be
Thou still the same in failure and in success!
Equilibrium, at-one-ment,— that is *yoga*!

The Gita, I humbly submit, does not regard activity as inferior to meditation. The Gita teaches reverence for life, and life includes both action and meditation. Each is holy each leads to the Lord. Yes,— activity, too, is a channel of the Divine Revelation. Only act with understanding and do thy duty, renouncing fruit. In your travel by bus or train, in the ticking of your typewriter, in the washing or mending of your clothes, in the daily routine of your kitchen work,— aye, in the very stress and strife of things, awake, O Arjuna, and greet your God!

O, for disciples of the Lord to take his message, far and wide, and tell waiting multitudes that work or action is not to be discarded but to be made a sacrament, an offering to the Lord.

Work impersonally. Regard yourself as an instrument, not a doer, and offer your daily work as a *yagna*, a sacrifice, to the Lord. Then will your work become worship.

God is Light, the Ring of "pure and endless Light", as the poet says,— pure, endless, calm and beneath it moves the shadow of work, the shadow of time, the shadow of the world, the shadow of *maya*. Greet God in *maya*. Let Him operate through you. Beautifully says the Master — "Renounce all actions in Me!" So may you be liberated from all accumulated "destiny". Then, as every star declares His Glory, the *maya* of work itself will declare Him and His Will. Then may your activity become a holy spark, and you may see in it a Loving Face, one of the many mystic Faces of God, the Unending.

Then, every little task you do will become a sacrament. Then, as Brother Lawrence says, "His consecrating mark will be on all to which your hands are set, and thereby will be awakened in you the sense of His abiding Presence." The lowliest task may, then, become an *ahuti*, an offering to Him, touched by Him, blessed by Him, in the great *yagna* of life. Only break the bonds of desire. Only renounce the fruits of action. And you will see every little thing, every little act, every broken fragment, as a fair flower in the Garden of the Beloved.

The true *karma-yogi* acts but in detachment. Men of action stand up,— yes, with courage,— to fight evil but, alas! they often become aggressive, proud, self-conscious. *Ahankara*, egoism, sets in. Our activity is often stung by the serpent of ambition. Śrī Kṛṣṇa reveals to us the beauty of that higher activity which is radiant with detachment and dedication.

Carlyle preached the gospel "Produce! Produce!" This gospel of work or activity has its value. But consider calmly what it is we are producing. Abortions? Or children of love? We are active, often, to organise ego-publicity. We need to understand that mere activity is not the goal of life. Let us be active, but let our activity be inspired by a spirit of detachment and dedication. Not a cult of ambition, but the call to dedicated life is the gospel of the Gita.

There is the story of an Iranian who is asked to read a manuscript. It is a sacred scripture. He reads it carefully. Certain words attract his attention. In imperfect English translation, they read —

"O labourer! art thou lifting the wood? Lift it in faith that the wood may help in building the Master's Temple!

"O peasant! art thou collecting cotton? Pick up cotton in the aspiration that thy cotton may become a wick in the Lamp of the Master!"

There you have, briefly expressed, the beauty of the life of action, as it is revealed in the teaching of the Gita. Yes,— lift the wood in the faith that the wood you lift may help in building the Master's Temple. Yes,— collect cotton, O comrade of Kṛṣṇa! in the aspiration that thy cotton may become a wick in the Lamp of the Master!

CHAPTER 1

The Loneliness Of Arjuna

In the first chapter we find that Arjuna stands on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, referred to as the “Dharmakshetra”, the “Holy Plain” on which the destiny of Hindustan was shaped. In the opposite camp, Arjuna sees his Elder, Bhishma, and his teacher, Drona. And in great agony of mind, Arjuna cries out — “I would rather eat the beggar’s bread than fight the Gurus whom I hold dear!”

Arjuna forgets that the fight to which he is called is defensive. It is not an aggressive war — it is a war in defence of India’s culture and India’s ideals of life. Arjuna says — “I will not fight!” and is about to leave the battlefield when Sri Krishna, with a smile on his lips, speaks to Arjuna to think, to reflect.

In a mood of enthusiasm, a mood of exaltation, did Arjuna come to Kurukshetra. What is the matter with him now? But a few minutes ago, Arjuna said — “I shall fight and I shall not fail!” But now he says — “Master! I will not fight!”

There is the law of reaction. He who rises to the heights of exaltation descends low and touches the very depths of depression.

On the battlefield of Kurukshetra are arrayed the two armies

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of the Kauravas and the Pandavas Arjuna surveys the battlefield Whom does he see ranged on the opposite side? Bhishma Pitamaha, Bhishma the Elder, revered by all,— Bhishma the *brahmachari*, the man who vowed not to marry at all This *bal-brahmachari*, in his old age, becomes the leader of the Kaurava army I have sometimes said to myself — What a wonderful nation must India have been, in the long ago, when a *brahmachari*, with all the accumulated strength of his purity and his experience of life, could be the leader of an army! Bhishma was to Arjuna like a father Bhishma had brought up the Pandavas Bhishma had nurtured them Bhishma had taught them *vidya* Bhishma had been their guardian, their Guru Arjuna sees that Bhishma, the man of peerless purity, leads the battle

Arjuna asks Krishna to drive between the lines of the two armies

He, Arjuna, spoke this word to Hrishikesha (Krishna) —
 “Draw up my chariot O, Achyuta (Krishna)! between the two armies so that I may behold them that stand on the battlefield, longing for battle, and may gaze on them that are gathered together here ready to fight on the Kaurava side ”

[I 21-23]

Preparations for war are now complete That very morning, Yudhishthira, looking at the Kaurava army, had said to Arjuna —
 “How can we win when we have such a formidable army to face?”
 And it was Arjuna who had said to his brother, Yudhishthira —
 “Victory comes not so much by might as by truth and *dharma* Victory is sure where Krishna is! Has not Krishna these two divine qualities,— strength and humility?”

It was then, too, that Krishna had advised Arjuna to purify himself and pray to Durga for victory And Arjuna, descending from his chariot, had chanted a hymn in praise of Durga And she had blessed Arjuna — “You will vanquish your enemy, for Narayana Himself is by you to help you!”

Yet Arjuna says now, seeing Bhishma on the other side —
 “How can I fight my guardian and my Guru?”

Arjuna remembers that Bhishma had brought him up as a child when he was a little one, when his father had retired to the

tapobana and when, later, he had passed-away

It is necessary that we understand Arjuna and his predicament with understanding born of sympathy. For Arjuna was no ordinary man. He was truly a great man. He was a great scholar versed in the scriptures,— *sruti* and *shastra*. He was an excellent archer, being Drona's favourite pupil. He was a man of courage. He was at once a disciple and a friend of Krishna. As boys, the two had been together at meals, at play, and in walks on river banks. And together had they travelled in forests and over the lakes. And Krishna had said — "Let my love for Arjuna never cease." Truly was Arjuna a great man,— great, not as so many are in these days, distinguished today, extinguished tomorrow, but great as have been those noble heroes of history whose greatness is not short-lived. So many of the world's prominent persons are like phosphorous which has illuminating power but is ephemeral, delusive. Greatness is more like electricity: it shines with a light which is rich in revealing quality.

Arjuna is a great man, but is confounded in the presence of a grave situation. Arjuna comes to the battlefield, prepared to fight, but he is puzzled on seeing his kinsmen standing arrayed against him. I have known scholars (to compare small things to great) feeling nervous at public meetings and unable to utter a single sentence. In the hour of decisive action, Arjuna is confounded. He is nervous on the battle ground. Arjuna says —

My limbs do fail, my mouth goes dry, my body quivers, my hair stands on end, my bow slips from my hand, my skin burns, my mind reels. I am unable to stand. [I 29, 30]

Arjuna feels lonely. Everything seems to be slipping away from him. Arjuna is sad at heart. His mind is agitated. A "cloud of forgetfulness" crosses Arjuna's consciousness. Why does he,— a hero of many a fight,— suddenly suffer from nervous fright?

This has happened, again and again. In the hour of mental agony, we are often tempted to renounce. Arjuna is moved to pity, seeing his kinsmen. And does not pity often open the door to weakness? Can I slay my kinsmen, Arjuna asks, and be happy? He is sad, unspeakably sad. Out of the heart are the issues of life. Arjuna's heart is moved to pity and then his mind is confused. What is my duty? he asks. Arjuna sees arrayed on the field his

teacher (*vidya-guru*), Drona, at whose feet he had learnt archery Arjuna sees yet another, greater even than Drona,— the *brahmachari*, the sage, Bhishma How can Arjuna slay them, his teachers and kinsmen, “fathers and sons, grandfathers, mother’s brothers, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives?”

“I desire not victory, O Krishna, nor kingdom, nor pleasures, nor even life!” [I. 32]

Is not Arjuna being guided by social conventions and customary morality? Must not all symbols of external morality be slain in order to develop the intuition, the inner intuition of the Spirit? Arjuna has yet to realise that to live is to renounce He who renounces not cannot expect to grow in the life of the Spirit Is there not the wisdom of higher life in the words of Sri Isa — “If any man cometh unto Me but is not prepared to renounce his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, he cannot be My disciple?”

Did not Prahlada renounce his own father to serve the Lord? Did not Shankara renounce his all before he could go out on his mission to India? Did not Chaitanya renounce his own wife before he could be a saviour of Bengal?

In his weakness, Arjuna does not listen to the voice within, does not surrender to spiritual intuitions Arjuna is swayed by the desire-mind and, in a subtle argument, indicates to Krishna why he, Arjuna, should not, must not, fight Arjuna says he takes his stand on the *shastric* teaching Arjuna’s argument may be set forth thus .—

“In fighting the Kauravas, our friends and kinsmen, we shall destroy our clan and race (*kula* and *jati*) Is it not a crime to murder our relatives and extirpate our race?

“In destroying our family and race we shall destroy the ancient laws and customs, our immemorial traditions Is not tradition essential to *dharma*, righteousness, and progress?

“In the perishing of tradition, will not lawlessness, chaos, come upon our race? And will there not set in corruption of *varnas*, social divisions, social life?

“And when corruption sets in, how can we serve the dear,

departed ancestors? And can we truly prosper when we trample upon the worship of the heroes of our race?"

And Arjuna reminds Krishna of the *shastric* teaching that "the abode of men whose traditions (*kula dharma*) are extinguished is in Hell" [I 44]

Arjuna is sincere but his mind is under a cloud and he,— a prince among Aryavarta's knights,— he talks of *vairagya*! He sinks down on the seat of his chariot. He casts away his bow and arrow (*sloka* 47). He would not like to return to the battlefield. He would go into a forest and lead the life of a mendicant.

Far better would it be for me, says Arjuna, if the sons of Dhritarashtra, with weapons in hand, should slay me in battle while I remain unresisting and unarmed.

Arjuna's words are uttered in agony,— and *moha* (attachment). The first *adhyaya* (chapter) in the Gita may well be named "*moha*" or "attachment". What a difference between *moha* and love! Love is impersonal *moha* is of the "outer" form. Love is a descent of the Eternal *moha* or attachment clips the very wings of aspiration and love. Seeing the armies arrayed on the Kurukshetra, Arjuna says to Sri Krishna — "How can I fight those I love?" And Krishna has to explain that Arjuna does not really love but has *moha* for his friends and relatives.

Arjuna is deeply impressed with the physical pain and material discomfort involved in war. Arjuna has yet to know that the end of life is not the pursuit of material happiness. How true is the teaching of Yagnavalkya in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* that "wives and children, teachers and kinsmen, are dear not for their own sake but for the sake of the *Atman*." Arjuna has yet to realise this truth emphasised in the *Upanishads*. But Arjuna's acts have their root in desire, not in *dharma*. Arjuna has yet to learn the lesson of *nishkama karma*, i.e. desireless action.

Fortunately, Krishna is Arjuna's charioteer (*parthasarathi*). Krishna holds the reins. God and man are both in the fight against evil. Fortunately, God holds the reins. Krishna understands that Arjuna has not true *vairagya*. Arjuna's *vairagya* is *moha*, is weakness. So when Arjuna says, "I will not fight," and sinks into silence, the Master smiles. Then Krishna speaks his words of wisdom unto Arjuna. "Weep not", the Master says to his

beloved disciple, "but be a man, a master-man! Abandon weakness, O Arjuna! Stand up in courage! Stand up and fight!"

Krishna asks Arjuna to plunge into action and fight heroically in a spirit of non-attachment,— free from the motive of egotism. The heroic note in the Gita needs to be emphasised today. To the youths of India, I say — Study the great heroes of the Bharata War. For we are passing through a period of disintegration. This ancient land of the *Rishis* lies broken and bleeding. The Gita teaches that weakness is a sin. *Shakti* is a spiritual virtue. Will-power must be developed and will-power must be both strong and pure. Wake up thy will-power,— is Gita's message to young India.

May I point out that one meaning of the epithet "Bhagavad Gita" is the "Song of Strength", the "Song of *Shakti*"? "Stand up!" says Krishna to Arjuna. Stand up and fight evil! Sri Krishna sounds a heroic note. The message of the Gita is one of courage. Life is a battlefield of values and your Temple, O children of the *Rishis*, is on the battlefield! March on! Nor beat retreat!

Let there be at the gate of every city in India a statue of Arjuna, the Hero, with the flame of Freedom in his hands! The statue will stand as a symbol of the heroic spirit which India must develop to become a nation of the strong, a nation of the free!

The first *adhyaya* of the Gita is entitled "Vishada Yoga". *Vishada* means depression. *yoga* means section. The first chapter is the section on depression. Vishada Yoga is the beginning of the Gita. Indeed, the first step in spiritual life is *vishada*, is darkness of the soul. In the very first step we take in spiritual progress, we cry out in sorrow — "What is the meaning of life? What does it all mean? Why are we here? Whither do we go?" And, perhaps, we cry as cried even the Great One — "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Did not Draupadi, too, experience this darkness of the soul when she cried out — "All have left me, my kinsmen, my brothers, my father,— even you, O Krishna!"

Everyone must pass through a period of loneliness before he enters into self-knowledge, awareness of himself. In loneliness does the seeker get behind his "ego" and in loneliness he realises

that he is not alone. He realises that while he has travelled far from Home, Krishna is with him still. Arjuna's mind is solitary but Krishna has begun to touch his heart. Above the clouds, above the darkness, shine His lotus-feet. Arjuna enters into "darkness" in order that he may return to God purified and may know that He dwells in darkness to lead Arjuna on, step by step, until, in rapturous ecstasy, he exclaims —

Thou art the Primal One! Thou art the Goal Supreme!
Thou dost fill the world from end to end, O Thou of Infinite
Form (*anantarupam*)! [XI 38]

CHAPTER 2

The Teaching Begins

[1]

We saw Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra : we saw him sad

Arjuna is a hero, but he is become nervous in the hour of action Arjuna is “with pity overcome” He says —

My heart is weighed down with faintness my mind is
confused I know not what my duty is! [II 7]

To him speaks Krishna “smiling”,— pointing out that this “pity” is a form of self-indulgence, “self-pity” It is *moha* for the family It is Arjuna’s weakness It is un-Aryan The true Aryan is a “just” man,— a man of culture and courage

Krishna’s smile and speech reveal a character strong yet meek,— full of strength yet full of love “Strong son of God, Immortal Love”,— wrote the English poet. Love Divine is strong Krishna speaks to Arjuna who has a better right to speak? Has he not worked for peace? Did he not plead passionately for peace in Duryodhana’s court? Krishna speaks to Arjuna,— and smiles Krishna knows that man is no helpless thing Man is essentially spiritual So to Arjuna is addressed Krishna’s appeal for action —“*Uttishtu! Paramtapa!*”

A Breath of God is in man The centuries' Battle with Evil has a meaning and Arjuna's Friend, Krishna, is by him to walk and work with him for the Destiny of Man.

Krishna smiles, for while Duryodhana plots against the people, Krishna sees that they are under a Divine protection The poor and oppressed are dear to Krishna Krishna smiles, for he knows that death cannot kill what never dies death is but crossing the Earth, as man crosses the seas

Arjuna has to pass through a period of spiritual desolation,— the “dark night”,— before the Light can come Arjuna has to realise that “Tradition” must not be destroyed but must protect justice, else would Society and Religion crumble to their fall

Arjuna is sincere but his mind is under a cloud He casts away his bow and arrow He would like to retire from the battlefield he would go into a forest and lead the life of a mendicant

To Arjuna speaks Krishna “smiling”, pointing out that Arjuna's arguments are based upon external and superficial aspects of the *shastras*, “the letter of the law” Arjuna's fear and doubt are, Krishna points out, un-*shastric*, against the real teaching and spirit of the *shastras* What is *dharma*? To Arjuna *dharma* is ritual To Krishna *dharma* is the Eternal Divine Law which asks for conformity to the Will of God in the service of suffering creation and, in that service, thinks not of fruits or results but leaves them to God

[2]

The teaching of the Gita begins with the second *adhyaya* (chapter) The first thought in the teaching is the difference between the *Atman* (Self) and the body

Krishna's call to Arjuna is his call to every pilgrim on the Path “Awake! Awake!” the Master says, “and be thyself! Arjuna! arise and do thy duty! Be thou a hero in this Day of India's Destiny!”

The Blessed Lord says to Arjuna —

Thy words sound wise, indeed, Arjuna! But thou art wasting grief where none is due The truly wise in heart never grieve for those who live, nor yet for those who die! [II 11]

Yes,— Arjuna speaks words of “wisdom” but they are not

wise,— for they “who are truly wise grieve not for the dead nor for the living ” For in all the shifting scenes of life the inner soul never dies What dies is the outer man, the body that, as an Eastern sage hath said, “plays its part on the boards of the world!”

The *shastras*, the scriptures, teach that the true man is the *Atman* (the Soul), not the body But Arjuna identifies “man” with the “body” He thinks the joys and sorrows of the body are those of the true man he confounds the unreal with the Real The true man is the inner soul

Sri Krishna says —

For truly never was there a time when I was not and never wert thou not, nor were these Lords of men ever not, nor will there ever be a time when we shall cease to be! [II 12]

The wisdom of the East and the wisdom of the West alike affirm that all beings that are today were eternally so in the One Essence Divine Listen to the words of the Lord —

As in this body the soul doth pass through stages three,— childhood, youth and age,— even so the soul doth win another body, another form the wise grieve not! [II 13]

The soul is not the body neither is the soul the “ego” The body and the “ego” change and pass away The *Atman* persists, the *Atman abides* In the *Vinaya Pitaka*, we have the words of the Buddha — “Inasmuch as the body is not the Self, it is impermanent!”

[3]

From the eleventh to the seventeenth *sloka*, Sri Krishna deals with the thought of Death, Happiness and Sorrow The *Atman*, he says, is Immortal the body and all names and forms are transitory and perishable Therefore, the wise mourn not for what is mortal,— for the body, its names and forms

The *Atman* is named in *sloka* 17 as “That” The Blessed Lord says —

Know thou That to be Indestructible by That is all this pervaded That is Imperishable, Immutable None can bring about the destruction of That! [II 17]

"*Tad*" means in English "That" "*Tad*", "That", is the "Self",— the *Atman* This truth,— *atma tatwa*,— every aspirant after wisdom seeks to know

"That", "*Tad*", is Life It pervadeth all Life is spread through all and Life cannot be destroyed Only its "bodies" (*dehi*),— the "fleeting frames",— can be destroyed "That", "*Tad*", is the "Soul" in the body "*Tad*", "That", is the "Eternal" embodied in the body "*Tad*", "That", is indestructible (*avinashi*) and incomprehensible

"*Tad*", "That", is, also, referred to as "*Emam*", "This" And "This" "neither slays nor is slain"

Know That as deathless thou,— the Life Supreme,— whereby this all in space is spread The Life Eternal is!

By none can "This" be slain! What ends is but the body, fleeting frame of "That",— the Ageless Ancient Self enshrined within The Self spread out in space endures the bodies die let them! Be a hero in the fight!

He who thinks the *Atman* slays and whoso thinks the *Atman* is slain,— both these know not! For know, O knight! the *Atman* cannot slay and the *Atman* can ne'er be slain!

[II 17-19]

The *Atman*, Arjuna! knows no beginning and no end, no birth and no death

He is not born nor can he ever die He came not into being nor ceaseth he to be!

Birthless, deathless, changeless still, abiding and ancient is he! He is not slain, even though the body is slain [II 20]

The *Atman*, the Self, eternally is One recalls Emerson's words in his well-known poem, *Brahma* — "If the red slayer thinks he slays, or if the slain thinks he is slain, they know not well the subtle ways I keep and pass and turn again"

Ancient is the *Atman* and abiding The *Atman* is everlasting as a Divine Form The *Atman* is eternal, as God is eternal

Know that he is birthless, deathless still and know that he is endless and endures for aye How can "That" e'er slay anyone, O Arjuna! or cause anyone to slay? [II 21]

When we feel that the *Atman*, the Self, is invulnerable, how

can any one slay the Self? It is the body which is subject to birth and death and other changes The body is like a garment

As when one casts his worn-out garments away, and new ones takes, the Embodied Soul casts away his worn-out garb of flesh and takes on new ones · the Self puts off the old, puts on the new [II 22]

The Eternal Spirit (*Brahman*) doth not move from place to place But the *jiva*, the embodied “soul”, moves from one body to another. The *jiva* takes birth each time how? The soul gathers to itself (1) mind, *manas*, (2) *prana*, life-force, and (3) body. When the physical body dies, the soul is not dead . it takes in the next birth of evolution the two others which remain,— the mind and the *prana* The soul gathers these two,— the mind and the *prana* the soul needs them for its manifestation on the Earth Thus is the soul “born” again · the soul is “embodied”!

[4]

The teaching of the Self, Krishna interprets in the Gita it is the teaching of the Upanishads The Self is the *Atman* He is the Eternal, the Ancient

How significant is this teaching of the *Atman*? The *Atman* is birthless and deathless But the body is subject to birth and death and other changes The body is like a garment when worn out, it is cast off and a new one is put on

And the universe? It is *samsara* It is not permanent In *samsara*, we meet only to part In the beautiful words of the Gita — “As one piece of wood meets another and parts from it again, so do individuals in the *samsara*” Transient and passing is the *samsara*

Whence cometh the *samsara*? It ariseth out of the Great Life referred to as the “great Ocean of Life”, the “great Sea of the Spirit” It is symbolised as the *Adishesha*, the primordial serpent, unto whom belongs knowledge, wisdom Unto him who (1) rises above the senses, and (2) rises above the mind (*manas*) and enters the realisation that cosmic manifestation is sprung from the Sea of the Spirit is revealed the Truth Why then, O pilgrim, hast thou made thy Home here on Earth? Thy Home is the “Sea”, the Infinite Dwell thou on this Earth as dwells the

pearl in the sea

The *Chandogya Upanishad* has well expressed it — “Verily, indeed, when Life hath left it, this body dies But the Life doth not die ” This “Life” is the *Atman* It is, also, called “Fire” in some scriptures And “death” is described as the “loosening of the silver cord” or the thread (*sutra*) on which Life or the *Atman* is suspended Loosen the “cord” · the Life or “Fire” or the *Atman* survives The “Fire” leaves one body and is “kindled” elsewhere. The body is the “faggot” it is the faggot which is consumed Death is “separation” from the body after “separation”, the soul “flies” to another body The earlier body returns to Nature, “whatever was of fire going to fire, of earth to earth, of air to air, of water to water ” The spiritual community called the Essenes, of the days of Jesus, held that “souls were united to their bodies in prisons” but that “when set free from the bonds of the flesh, they rejoiced and mounted upward ” I have, again and again, meditated on the truths expressed in the *Chandogya Upanishad* -

Take refuge in these three thoughts -

The *Atman* is Indestructible

The *Atman* is Unshaken

The *Atman* is the Essence of Life !

The body is the garment used by man as long as it is useful, and is thrown off when it becomes old and is worn-out another garment is then worn It is necessary to remember that the “garment” is not the “man” As Plato tells us — “The man and his body are different things What, therefore, is the man? He who uses his body ”

The true man is the soul the body is his mask, his garment, his tool, his instrument Looked at from another point of view, the body is a “prison” Plato calls it an “enclosure in which the soul is incarcerated until the penalty is paid ”

“Ancient” and “Immutable” is the soul his “Homeland” is not here Even during the short period of his pilgrimage here, he is on Earth only in part One part of the soul, Plotinus says, “always abides on high!” “When the prescribed period arrives,” he says, “the soul spontaneously descends and enters into the body ”

thus —

There is a Soul above the soul of each,
A mightier Soul which yet to each belongs
There is a Sound made of all human speech,
And numerous as the concourse of all songs .
And in that Sound lives each, in each that Soul,
Though all the Ages are its life-time vast
Each soul that outbreathes in its most sacred whole
Receiveth Life that doth for ever last!

It is difficult to forget the words of a saint who was also a great psychologist — “I tremble and I thrill I tremble because I know that I am unlike Him I thrill because I feel myself like Him ”
Above all is He flowing into all is He So it is that —

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong .

And the most ancient Heavens through Thee are fresh and strong!

Out of the Spirit comes the soul The Spirit penetrates the soul The soul is called *Atman* the Spirit is the *Atman* Supreme The twain are, in essence, one The Spirit is Being the soul is Life, is Energy, creative Energy

The soul is “amphibious” it can live in two worlds,— the upper world and the downward world The upper world is one of Spirit the downward world is one of matter In the world of matter lives the soul,— with a longing for the Spirit,— a longing often suppressed The soul lives in matter, in its body, but is restless “Our souls are restless till they find their rest in Thee!” Like the light, which burns disturbed by wind and tempest, is the soul of man in body bound Yet ancient and unborn is the soul The body is like a garment it wears out, one day The soul is ever new

Arjuna forgets that man is not the body the true man, the *Atman*, dieth not Each soul is an offspring, a child of the Spirit The soul lives for sometime here on the earth, but is never wholly sundered from the Supreme,— the Mother Soul In the midst of all temptation, all struggle, all sin, the soul holds on to the Spirit. An ancient philosopher exclaimed — “He who has once been touched by truth, by righteousness, by goodness, though he entered the pangs of hell, that man could never turn therefrom

The man who is moved by truth, righteousness and goodness can no more quit these three things than God can quit His Godhead ”

[6]

Not a few of India's prophets of the Eternal Word have voiced the wisdom of the Gita and have been devotees of Krishna. Some of them, endowed with the gift of unusual psychical constitution, have experienced ecstasy and realised that Truth is communion of the soul with the "Oversoul" or the Spirit. When Plotinus said to his companions as he was passing away, "Now the Divine in me is struggling to re-unite with the Divine in the All," was he not re-wording the Hindu doctrine of the soul's communion with the Spirit?

When the Gita links the soul with the Spirit in the One Life of the Eternal, the Gita teaches the truth which organised religions have often, alas! forgotten — "God is not external to any one." God, the Spirit, is the Root of the soul of man. God is the Centre of life. Be *atmavan*,— possessed of the *Atman*, the Self,— is the Gita's great teaching. Rise above ritualism,— is the word of the Gita to every seeker after the Highest. *Atma labham na parama vidyate*. There is nothing higher than the possession of the *Atman*, the Self. The Supreme Reality is the *Atman* and to attain to it, you should rise above *karmakanda* (ritualism). The Perfect One, the Spirit, is beyond all limitations of *gunas* (qualities). The soul must rise above them — above all "pairs of opposites". The true life of the soul, the *Atman*, is what "flows" or "radiates" as Light from the One Spirit, moving out in service to others,— as a sacrifice to the Supreme.

The soul can live in two worlds. He can live upward,— in the world of Spirit. he can live downward,— in the world of matter. He can ascend to the Spirit. he can move down to matter,— to a level lower even than the animal, to the tumult of the flesh. Moving down to matter, the soul is dominated by desire, the flesh, the body. In the soul within is a radiance of the Spirit. but the body is as a lantern which is in a turmoil of wind and tempest. Yet even at its lowest, the soul holds to the Spirit. The soul is never sundered from the Spirit. There is in the soul a "point".

The body is, also, called in the Gita the "town" wherein the soul resides for sometime to purify himself and fulfil his part in evolution. The "senses" are the "gates" of this body. In the *Katha Upanishad*, the body is called a "chariot", and the senses are called the "horses"

The *Atman* is the Self. And Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that there is no death to the *Atman*. The *Atman* is deathless —

I say to thee that weapons wound not him (the *Atman*), and flame consumeth not the *atmic* life. No waters can wet or overwhelm the Self, no scorching breath of wind can dry him away!

Yes,— safe from wound and safe from fire is he, and safe from moisture and from draught alike. Unborn and stable, changeless still, Eternal and unmanifest, by word and thought uncompassed, immutable,— for ever!

Thus to know him is to know that foolish 'tis to mourn for what befalls the body, not the soul [II 23-25]

The Spirit is *Brahman* who maintains the cosmic order, the Spirit that sustains the universe, and is Eternal. And the soul, the individual soul, is a ray of the Spirit. The soul is, like the Spirit, Eternal, immutable. So did a Master tell his disciples — "From the very beginning have ye been immortal. ye are children of Life."

The Gita's word is — Don't mourn death. "So far from mourning death," said an Eastern sage, "you ought to honour it and reverence it." The Spirit, said a seer of Greece, "dies not but new life repeats in other forms and only changes seas." Plato taught that "death is a sort of travelling from hence to another place." Death is changing garments,— "one cloth for another."

"Our Father which art in Heaven," said Jesus. Our "Father" is the Spirit, the "Hidden Essence" called by some mystics, the "One Fire." Kabir called this "Hidden Essence" the "One in all things",— the Supreme Soul, the "Father of life, of Existence,— through whom all acts and breathes"

May I not speak of death as the gate which leads to the Light? Death is, in the Hindu Faith, associated with the name of Shiva. We need must remember that the Shaiva *mandalis* regard Shiva as "a God of love and grace". This is specially emphasised in

Tamil Shaivism A Shaiva *bhakta* sings of Shiva thus —

In His Love, the Lord of Life
Doth punish, not to crush,
But that the sinner may mend
His ways and do the right
Shiva's acts do flow from His Love!
Goodness, love, grace, gentleness,
Friendship, modesty, penance, chastity,
Charity, reverence, truthfulness,
Purity and self-control,
Wisdom and worship,—
All these are Virtues Pure,—
All these are the living word
Of the loving Lord!

In *sloka*s 20-25 of the second *adhyaya* of the Gita is given us the teaching of the *Atman* which is the centre-point of the wisdom of the Gita. This wisdom interprets life and the world in terms not of space-time objects but of values of a different order,— the order of the inner Self. These values are Truth, Goodness, Beauty and Holiness. These values have been emphasised by the great creative spiritual heroes of the Race. These values reflect not surface-life but life at the depths which alike Krishna and Jesus reflected when they said — “God is Love.” These five,— Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Holiness, Love,— indicate the atmosphere in which great souls have moved.

[5]

The Gita's insight may be indicated briefly thus: there is the Realm of the Spirit: the Upanishads call Him *Brahman*. Emerson speaks of the “Oversoul”,— the “Source” and “Ground” of all souls. Sometimes, the word is used,— the “One”, or the “Self”. A Vedic seer speaks of “the One whom sages call by many names”, the “Spirit”, the “Soul of all souls”, the “Hidden Self of the universe”. Out of this Self all things flow. It is the Root from which has sprung all that is. He was a great thinker, one of the greatest in the history of Humanity,— Plotinus. “Everything,” he said, “that comes to be must of necessity derive.” A Western poet refers to the Spirit, the Supreme *Atman*, in beautiful words

thus :—

There is a Soul above the soul of each,
A mightier Soul which yet to each belongs
There is a Sound made of all human speech,
And numerous as the concourse of all songs .
And in that Sound lives each, in each that Soul,
Though all the Ages are its life-time vast
Each soul that outbreathes in its most sacred whole
Receiveth Life that doth for ever last'

It is difficult to forget the words of a saint who was also a great psychologist — "I tremble and I thrill I tremble because I know that I am unlike Him I thrill because I feel myself like Him " Above all is He flowing into all is He So it is that —

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong .

And the most ancient Heavens through Thee are fresh and strong!

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Arjuna forgets that man is not the body the true man, the *Atman*, dieth not Each soul is an offspring, a child of the Spirit The soul lives for sometime here on the earth, but is never wholly sundered from the Supreme,— the Mother Soul In the midst of all temptation, all struggle, all sin, the soul holds on to the Spirit An ancient philosopher exclaimed — "He who has once been touched by truth, by righteousness, by goodness, though he entered the pangs of hell, that man could never turn therefrom

The man who is moved by truth, righteousness and goodness can no more quit these three things than God can quit His Godhead ”

[6]

Not a few of India's prophets of the Eternal Word have voiced the wisdom of the Gita and have been devotees of Krishna. Some of them, endowed with the gift of unusual psychical constitution, have experienced ecstasy and realised that Truth is communion of the soul with the "Oversoul" or the Spirit. When Plotinus said to his companions as he was passing away, "Now the Divine in me is struggling to re-unite with the Divine in the All," was he not re-wording the Hindu doctrine of the soul's communion with the Spirit?

When the Gita links the soul with the Spirit in the One Life of the Eternal, the Gita teaches the truth which organised religions have often, alas! forgotten. — "God is not external to any one." God, the Spirit, is the Root of the soul of man. God is the Centre of life. Be *atmavan*, — possessed of the *Atman*, the Self, — is the Gita's great teaching. Rise above ritualism, — is the word of the Gita to every seeker after the Highest. *Atma labham na parama vidyate*. There is nothing higher than the possession of the *Atman*, the Self. The Supreme Reality is the *Atman* and to attain to it, you should rise above *karmakanda* (ritualism). The Perfect One, the Spirit, is beyond all limitations of *gunas* (qualities). The soul must rise above them — above all "pairs of opposites". The true life of the soul, the *Atman*, is what "flows" or "radiates" as Light from the One Spirit, moving out in service to others, — as a sacrifice to the Supreme.

The soul can live in two worlds. He can live upward, — in the world of Spirit. he can live downward, — in the world of matter. He can ascend to the Spirit. he can move down to matter, — to a level lower even than the animal, to the tumult of the flesh. Moving down to matter, the soul is dominated by desire, the flesh, the body. In the soul within is a radiance of the Spirit. but the body is as a lantern which is in a turmoil of wind and tempest. Yet even at its lowest, the soul holds to the Spirit. The soul is never sundered from the Spirit. There is in the soul a "point"

which is never sundered from God. This makes the soul, the *Atman*, divine. In our wildest wanderings in the tumult and turmoil of the flesh, the greatest noise and din of the body, we are still linked with Him, and any moment He may flow into us and make us new. Beauty and Truth and Goodness and Holiness and Love may enter into our hearts at any moment and renew us, recreate us, make us, verily, sanctified children of God. So it is that Ratnakar, the robber, became Valmiki, the *rishi*, and Augustine, the sinner, became a saint and the Father of Catholic mysticism.

“The secret of immortality,” the *Kathopanishad* says, “is to be found in purification of the Heart, in meditation, in realisation of the identity of the Self within and the *Brahman* without. For immortality is union with God.” Immortal is the Self and he dwells in the lotus of the Heart. “Man does not live by Breath alone,” says the *Kathopanishad*, “but by Him in whom is the power of Breath.”

[7]

Krishna's teaching to Arjuna is — “O son of Kunti! you belong essentially to the spiritual order!” With all your weakness and *moha* and mental embarrassment you are in the world of Spirit. you are made in the Image of the Eternal. your soul stands sure in God! However much you may live in the stage of sense, your soul never absolutely forgets her Home. The Home of the soul is God. Know thyself and thou wilt know God. For when you look into yourself, you see God in you. I recall the words of a Muslim saint — “Ye men! why do ye look without for what is within you?”

Deep within the soul is the Divine Spirit. In the centre of the soul is He,— the Divine Spirit. We explore the surface-mind. we do not go deep down. In the surface-mind we often find the “ego”, not the *Atman*. The *Atman* is the Inner Light. There is the point of the soul's contact with God. Nearer than your body is God to you. Open the door of your Heart and behold God. He is ever in! Alas! you are dominated by desires. so are you away! The Divine Presence is being perpetually poured into you. turn not your face away from Him. The prayer of the Vedic *Rishi* is

O Thou All-Universal Brahman!
Remove my veils of ignorance
That I may behold Thy Light!

In the seven hundred *slokas* of the Gita shines this thought God is in thy soul, for thy soul is a Ray of the Divine Spirit The soul is rightly called the "thread" This "thread" is thy richest treasure This "thread" unites thee eternally with *Tat* —with That,— with the Ancient, the Changeless, the Eternal, the Self *Sanatanam*

Why does the soul live downward at all? Why does it move downward toward the world of matter?

There springs in us a desire for "separateness", for ego-life, for isolation for a life which we may live apart from the Larger Life

But there is consolation in the thought that the soul can arrest its downward movement and can withdraw from the things which separate it and return into its inner sanctuary where it finds its God This "withdrawal" takes place when a holy enthusiasm invades the soul, a "divine madness" overtakes it! This happens when the seeker sees the Light Divine

[8]

The truth of the *Atman* is open to all but many have not the urge to seek the truth Many suffer from doubts Many are scared away by difficulties Only a few there be who face the perils of the pilgrimage and reach the goal They who attain are lost in wonder

One looks upon the *Atman* as a marvel (*ascharyavat*)
another speaks of the *Atman* as a marvel (*ascharyavat*)
another hears of the *Atman* as a marvel yet even after hearing, who hath known the *Atman*? [II 29]

Wonder,— they all exclaim Wonder of wonders, *Ascharyarat*! Yet none seems to understand the *Atman*

The *Atman*, the soul, is unknown to most of us, for we have ceased to be childlike As we grow in years, we lose the sense of wonder. This wonder-sense must we recover if we will recover the lost *Atman*

They brought children to Jesus, we read that he should touch them and bless them but the disciples rebuked them When

Jesus saw it, he said — “Suffer the little children to come unto Me forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God!” Then Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them

On another occasion, when his disciples asked him — “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?” he called a little child unto him and, holding the child in their midst, said —

“Verily, I say unto you

‘Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven

‘And whoso, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

‘And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me ’ ”

And did not Krishna play with children,— the *gopas* and *gopis* of Brindaban,— singing to them on the flute, climbing up the trees to pluck fruit for them? He loved little children How they went to him and sat at his feet and he laid his hands on their heads and blessed them!

And who is a child? He who believes in loveliness, who sees wonder,— who believes in love and sees a “world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower”!

We are not awake to the wonder of life The Beloved comes each day to touch us, to pour Himself into us, to meet us in the Spirit, to lift us to a plane above Desire As a saint of Upper India says —

Only through Thee can I meet with Thee, and that in a moment of time

Never of myself can this thing be, though countless ages pass!

What is the *Atman*? The Breath Divine The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and other inspired scriptures are Books of Wisdom, for they are as “the breath of the Eternal”. So Rishi Yagnavalkya spake to Maitreyi — “As smoke and sparks arise from a lighted fire kindled with fuel, even so have been breathed forth from the Eternal all knowledge and all wisdom,— what we know as the Rīg Veda, the Yajur Veda, and the rest. They are the

Breath of the Eternal "

Who hath beheld the *Atman*? The *Rishi* of the *Kathopanishad* says — "Even when one has beheld and heard and proclaimed It, none has understood It!" The *Atman*, the Self, is attained by very few And they exclaim — "*Ascharyavat*!" "As a marvel,— a wonder!" "Wonder", "marvel", is the *Atman*

Beyond this one word, "wonder", "marvel", who may speak of Him, the *Atman*? "The chariot of speech finds no track on which to go!" Therefore, the *Rishi* says — "To their questionings offer them silence, only silence,— and a finger pointing the way!" "No easy task it is," writes al-Ghazali, the mystic of Islam, "to discover the unclouded glory (the Spirit) that lies behind the veil "

Wrapt in silence, the soul learns more in a single glance than the busy brain and the restless senses in all their toil and noise.

The eye of the *Atman*, the soul, beholds the Light which is not the ordinary light such as flesh may see The *Atman* beholds the Light in which death is "an almost laughable impossibility",— as Tennyson said In the light of the soul you recover lost memory", the "memory of the Holy Things", which once you beheld in the Unseen world This "memory" or "recollection" is, in a true mystical sense, the visit to you of the Beloved

In the hour of this "Recollection", you behold the Light and exclaim — "What a wonder,— the soul!" And you say to yourself — "Where was I? And where am I now?" In that hour you forget yourself and you remember your real Self Sometimes, you feel you are unable to say if your soul is in the body or out of the body

In that hour of Recollection, the feeling grows on you that the world is not composed of dead matter You feel that a Loving Presence,— the Spirit Divine,— fills the universe You realise that you are not mortal but inherit the Life Eternal

Does the feeling come to you that Krishna has entered into you? Or is the feeling an illusion? Only the Heart bears witness to the Truth within you The tumult of the flesh is hushed the tumult of the world has, for the time being, ceased You feel you have risen beyond desire A hush of peace,— *chitta-shanti*,— a calm, like mute music, fills you

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The *Atman* is Light If you would know it, learn to pray and meditate and offer yourself in service of the poor and lowly and each day kindle, in your Heart, the Fire of the Holy Ones,— the Fire of Sacrifice The *Atman* is, then, unveiled,— and you see!

One mark of this seeing is that you hear,— a Song The whole of the “Song of the Lord” sings to me in the words — “Come unto Me!” “*Mamekam saranam vraja*!” It is the one-line Gita which I often recite in meditation But to hear it is wonderful Its music subdues the Heart! Then, for a moment, you worship the very Voice which clasps you and you feel that a wonderous calm is within you Then you know with a Knowledge which is immediate, intuitive and this Knowledge is the “Illumination”, of the pure

These be blessed moments They are, perhaps, the purest moments when, absorbed and inebriated, you truly live In such moments you experience a kind of “waking trance” In such moments, may be, you realise that in communion with Wonder is the life which is life, indeed

Verily, this Knowledge is Illumination The Gita and the New Testament,— and, indeed, all the wisdom-scriptures of Humanity,— are radiant with this one Illumination Arjuna gazes on the glorified Face of Krishna and exclaims —

Thou art the First of all the Gods
 Thou art the Person from Everlasting,
 The Primal Person Thou!
 Reverence to Thee from before and from behind,
 Reverence to Thee from every side!
 Thou art the Home of the Universe
 By Thee are all the worlds pervaded,
 O Thou the Infinite,
 Ever Ancient, Ever New!
 As father unto his son,
 As comrade unto his comrade,
 As lover unto his beloved,
 So do Thou bear with us!

To this Knowledge which rises to Illumination does Krishna lead Arjuna, stage by stage Therefore, Arjuna! grieve not! Grief

for the dead or the living is incompatible with spiritual wisdom
There is no death to the *Atman* that is deathless

[10]

The way to this, the Gita urges, is "detachment" Krishna asks Arjuna to be a hero on the battlefield of life And he who would be a hero of action must learn to be detached Therefore, must he learn to accept both pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, as equal,— not elated by the one, not depressed by the other The true hero must be a *yogi*,— a man of mastery, a master-man The *yogi* is a man of *samata* equal-minded is he and undisturbed in all situations and experiences of life In the midst of all conflicts of the outer, he stands immovable, calm Listen to the words of the Master —

Taking as equal pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, gird thee for thy work,— thy "battle",— O Arjuna!
[II 38]

Such men have appeared, again and again, in East and West Serene men, their faces lit up with light, their presence magnetic, their words charged with truth and beauty and love,— tranquil in the midst of work, calm yet not alone, humble and tender, compassionate, burden-bearers of the common people Such men have heard in their Heart the Holy Word of the Gita, the Hidden Word of the Holy Spirit

One such man is referred to by Krishna in the Gita as Janaka He was a king, yet he tilled the soil everyday and mixed with the peasant, loving the soil as a devoted child loveth his mother, blessing his people and asking every day the Mother Earth to bless him and his people To Janaka were dear, too, the birds and light and water, the earth and sky This vision is sung in that little poem which the Hindu *sanyasin* loves to sing, again and again —

O Mother Earth, Father Sky,
Brother Bird, Friend Light, Sweetheart Water,—
Here take my salutations with folded hands!
For today I am melting away into the Supreme,
Because my heart is become pure
And all delusions have vanished!

The man of detachment is the man whose "heart is become pure", all his "delusions have vanished", all his *moha*, attachment, annihilated. Such men,— rising above the *dwandas*, the opposites of life,— are referred to by Sri Krishna in the Gita in words which I have read, again and again, with tear-touched eyes —

Free are they from passion and delusion
They break the bonds which bind them to flesh!
They dwell in the Spirit
From them hath desire departed!
Liberated are they from the pairs of opposites
And so, freed from pleasure and pain,
They pass, undeluded, to the Spirit Supreme!

[11]

Sri Krishna interprets in the second *adhyaya* (chapter II) of the Gita one important aspect of *yoga*. *Yoga*, he points out to Arjuna, is conquest over circumstances. Arjuna's confusion, in the hour of action, is due to lack of conquest, and this is due to lack of understanding. Arjuna forgets that man is not the body, that the true man, the *Atman*, dieth not. Arjuna! if you had a knowledge of the *Atman*, you would not be "irresolute" you would be a *yogi* of action. And a *yogi* does not fall a victim to circumstance. a *yogi* is not swayed by every passing wind of impulse or emotion.

For *yoga* is equilibrium, balance. Therefore, does the *yogi* know the true secret of action. he is a man of "true skill in action". He rises "beyond the pairs of opposites" (*dwandas*). He has no desire for any personal benefit. He acts self-poised, self-harmonised.

Be thou, O Arjuna, beyond the pairs of opposites, ever steadfast in *sattva* (purity), careless of possessions, self-controlled, self-possessed, full of the Self. Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits. So act thou, Arjuna! renouncing attachments and relationships (*sanga*), and balanced evenly in success and failure. Equilibrium (*samata*) is called *yoga*.

[II 45, 47, 48]

The *yogi* is not swayed to and fro by every passing wind of

impulse The *yogi* is united to the *buddhi* (pure reason), and he brings his *buddhi*, through contemplation, in union with the Divine Will, the Divine *Shakti*, the *Atman* The *yogi* lives and moves and has his being in God

[12]

So fascinating is the picture of the true man, the master-man, the *yogi*, as painted by Sri Krishna, that Arjuna is eager to know more And Arjuna asks — “Tell me, Master what are the marks of such a man, the man whose *pragna* (understanding) is well poised, established in the Divine Spirit (*Atman*)?”

Krishna re-emphasises the truth that such a man,— the *yogi*,— is the true man, the wise man He is a sage Of this “sage divine” there are two marks —

(1) He is a man of spiritual detachment He has renounced *raga* (attraction) and *dvesha* (hatred) . he is *nirmohi* He has expelled every desire from his heart. He is freed from the dominion of the flesh. He is freed from the attraction of matter He is a stranger to fear and anger.

As a tortoise draws in its limbs,— head and feet,— at the approaching danger, so does the *yogi*, the sage divine, draw in his senses and organs when sense-objects would attract him

He not only turns away from objects of senses he has no relish for them The very desire for them is lost For he dwells in the Supreme he lives in God!

Even relish for the objects of sense turneth away from him
after the Supreme is seen [II 59]

How different is such a sage from the man who is attracted by objects of senses! Such a man is feeble-minded, not stable He is violently tempted by objects of attraction He has likes and dislikes He is perturbed easily He is in a state of concern, perpetual worry, fear, excitement He is restless He is always seeking objects of gratification

This “seeking”, “concern”, “musing” on the object of gratification flares up into passion (*kama*)

When passion (*kama*) is thwarted, flames anger

Anger (*krodha*) causes loss of sanity he passes into a state of

delusion (*sanmoha*)

In this state, he loses memory (*smṛiti*) the memory of his Guru's *upadeśh*, his Preceptor's teaching, the memory of life's great ideals

Losing this memory, he loses the power of discrimination, he loses *buddhi* (pure reason) He ceases to discriminate

Losing *buddhi*, he no longer delights in the pursuit of spiritual life He falls away from the Ideal He renounces the path He goes into utter forgetfulness He loses all he is a lost man!

Man, musing on the objects of sense, conceiveth an attachment to these, from attachment ariseth desire (*kama*); from desire cometh anger

From anger (*krodha*) proceedeth delusion (*sanmoha*), from delusion ariseth confused memory (*smṛiti-vibhṛa-maha*), from confused memory cometh the destruction of pure reason (*buddhinashah*), from destruction of pure reason, he perishes! [II 62, 63]

(2) The sage is centred in the *Atman*, in God Therefore, do sense-objects lose all attraction for the sage He contemplates Truth He dwells on his Goal, the Supreme God is his centre of gravity He does not wander after this object or that he gravitates to God His senses do not rove "He goeth to peace" He becomes a *Bodhisatva* He becomes a *muni* he speaks little he grows in silence

He sleeps to the things of the earth to which ordinary men are awake He awakes to the Truths to which ordinary men are asleep The centre of his life has shifted from the world and its possessions to God and His Imperishable Love

He is redeemed from attractions of the earth His true and normal centre of gravity is within He goeth no more astray He enters into *Brahma-Nirvana*, the Peace that passeth understanding, the Peace of the Supreme

Forsaking all desires and going onwards, free from yearnings,— selfless and without egoism,— he goes to Peace (*Shanti*)

This is the Eternal State, O Arjuna, son of Pritha! Having attained thereto, none is bewildered. Who, even at the death-

hour, is established therein,— he goeth to the *Nirvana* of the
Eternal [II 71, 72]

CHAPTER 3

The Path Of Action

[1]

Arjuna draws a wrong construction of Krishna's teaching

The *yogi's* picture, as drawn by Krishna, is, Arjuna feels, very fascinating. It is the picture of the master-man who lives in contemplation of God. And so Arjuna asks — "Master! if contemplation of the Supreme is so beautiful, why should I engage in action, this dreadful action, this war?"

In answer to Arjuna's question, Krishna unfolds his doctrine of action

(1) Krishna points out that the way is one,— the way of wisdom

(2) But wisdom has two or three aspects and they are inseparable,— like the obverse and reverse sides of a medal. We think of the Supreme in two or three ways, and so arise different ways of approach to wisdom

Sometimes we think of the Supreme as *Chit*, as Truth and so we emphasise knowledge. That is *gnana-marga*, the path of Knowledge

Again, we think of the Supreme as *Sat*, as *Shakti*, as Life, as

Activity and so arises *karma-marga* or the Path of Action

Again we think of the Supreme as *Ananda*, Joy, Love so there is the *bhakti-marga*, the Path of Devotion.

But wisdom is one, is unity, though its pursuit may be in three ways,— *gnana*, *karma* and *bhakti*

(3) The ancient scriptures taught *Sankhya* and *Yoga Sankhya* is knowledge *Yoga* is action Many men separate the two, as Arjuna does but the true *yogi* does not divide them The two are *unseparable*

Sankhya separated from *yoga* becomes a speculative study, inner contemplation and the result? Inordinate desire for psychic phenomena! And *yoga* separated from *sankhya* results in rites of extreme asceticism, in self-immolating deeds of penance and, in several cases, in a desire for super-natural powers. The practice of each is stimulated by a desire for the sake of results, *phala*, *siddhis*, “fruits”!

[2]

Action, *karma*, is inevitable

(1) Inactivity is physically impossible · the mere maintenance of the body is not possible without action

(2) By avoiding action you are not automatically led on to perfection, the Spirit, but to “nature” (*prakriti*) and “nature” acts

In “nature” there are three *chakras*, three centres of energy From them come involuntarily forces which set in motion the senses of the body These three centres are *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* They are the three horses of the chariot of every individual Fortunate he if Krishna draws them · Krishna will lead them to the Life Divine But if desire, appetite or flesh draws them, it will lead them to *avidya*, *kama* and loss of life or destruction

(3) These three centres of energy act And even if you externally refrain from the senses and organs by effort, yet must your desire brood upon the objects of sense And by artificially repressing the desire, you become a false pietist Externally you give up work but your desire dotes on it! You are not really

inactive

Man winneth not freedom from action by abstaining from activity

Nor can any one, even for an instant, remain really actionless for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the three qualities (*gunas*) born of nature (*prakṛiti*)

And if you sit, externally controlling organs of action but dwelling in your mind on the objects of the sense, you are a bewildered man, a false pietist, a hypocrite [III 4-6]

[3]

Right action must you perform keeping clear at once of *akarma* (inaction) and *vikarma* (wrong action)

What is right action? It is action without concern or "interest" It is not dominated by a personal desire for "fruit" or "results" Right action is "motiveless" It is action for action's sake it is action in which there is "disregard of result"

Right action is of three kinds —

(1) *Dharma* or duty.

The world is a stage The stage-director is God You have a part to play this "part" is your "duty", *swadharma* Have no other thought in action You will then go free from fear and doubt Falter not! "Talk less and paint more!" said Goethe Go on with your work and be unconcerned about the "result"

Some will praise thee, some will blame

Do the right and sing His Name!

Your "work", "duty", is *swadharma* it is better than *paradharma* *Swadharma* is what the World-will means for you! (cf III 35)

(2) *Loka sangraha* or the good of mankind, the world's welfare

Motiveless must action be else would it create bondage

But Krishna makes one concession,—one only The legitimate motive of action is permitted by Krishna it is the good of mankind Action prompted by the motive to benefit mankind is, also, right action Altruistic action does not create bondage

And Krishna mentions Janaka and himself in this connection Janaka, the great Indian king, attained to perfection through altruistic action, the service of his people And Krishna refers to his vicarious life among men Krishna covets nothing Krishna works not for any reward There is nothing in the three worlds which is not the Lord's already "yet I mingle in action." Why? Men follow the Elders they set up the standard for men So Krishna acts to set an example to men else would men be indolent

Janaka and others, indeed, attained to perfection by
action [III 20]

And if I mingled not in action unwearied, men all around
would follow Me, O Arjuna!

And the three worlds would fall into ruin And I would
then be the author of chaos, and these creatures would be
destroyed [III 23, 24]

(3) *Yagna* or sacrifice

God, the *Prajapati*, the "Lord of Creatures", created the world out of His own Spirit He gave His own Spirit to all creatures He entered into every atom *Ishavaṣyam idam sarvaṁ* All-pervading is the presence of the Lord! "Brahma entered into the universe," sings a *Rishi* in an *Upanishad* So did matter become alive,— with beauty and strength, with order and activity, with intelligence and attraction, with purpose and power

So must you pour your very Self into your work or action that is sacrifice Pour into your work the best that is in you! Instil in your action the very breath of your life, the vibration of your Self!

Sacrifice all egoism, the "I" in action Become a "martyr" to Him Then you attain to "inaction in action!"

The man who rejoiceth in the Self, with the Self is satisfied and is content in the Self,— for him verily there is nothing to do [III 17]

A little girl brought flowers to her teacher and said — "I bring these flowers with *shraddha* for you accept them!"

And the teacher asked — "You give me flowers what do you give the Lord?"

And she said :— “I give myself to Him!”

There is the secret of sacrifice.

Surrendering all actions to Me, with thy thoughts resting on the supreme Self, from hope and egoism freed, and of mental fever cured, fight thou, O Arjuna! [III. 30]

[4]

All the three types of right action rise above the two feelings from which attachment (*moha*) ariseth, viz. (1) *raga* (attraction) and (2) *dvesha* (hatred)

All the three types are actions which are true renunciation, because they are devoid of attachment (*moha*) It is attachment which binds . but these types of action move on the plane of non-attachment, i e. release from bondage to the material world

And action done without attachment, O Arjuna, leadeth on to liberation

By performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the *Parama*, the Transcendent, the Supreme

[III 19]

As opposed to right action is wrong action (*vikarma*), sin (*papam*) And Arjuna is emboldened to ask his Friend and Master the question — “Why does a man fall into sin?”

None sinneth but goeth against his will A secret force seems to constrain a man to go wrong, drags him to *vikarma* (sin) Why does a man go astray against his will?

Dragged on by what does a man commit sin, reluctantly indeed, O Krishna! as it were by force constrained?[III 36]

Krishna answers Arjuna's question

(1) Our foe is *kama*, desire, lust And *kama* is born of *rajas* (motion, flesh) and *kama* is insatiable Henry VIII, the English king, was named “The Great Widower” He married one woman after another he married six times Insatiable was his lust *Kama* cannot be quenched The more you satisfy it, the more you add fuel to its flame *Kama* reigns over man's unregenerate senses *Kama* imprisons man's spiritual nature

(2) *Kama* is a black cloud (*dhuma*), smoke it conceals the light

of the *Atman*

Kama, too, is *mala*, dust it conceals the mirror of the Self and so darkens the powers of discrimination

Kama is the *avarana* (envelope) which covers reason, knowledge

(3) *Kama* invades the three *chakras*, the three centres of the senses (*indriyas*), the mind (*manas*) and *buddhi* (reason) and, invading the three, darkens them When *kama* leads the senses, the mind and the reason, the man goes swiftly down the path of decline

Goethe was a great man but when *kama* darkened his senses, he ran after girls in restlessness Nelson had a great mind, but when *kama* swayed it, Nelson lived with the wife of another man Shelley was a man of *buddhi* (reason, intuition) but it, too, was darkened by *kama* and Shelley, leaving his wife, married another woman, and the first wife committed suicide!

(4) What is the way out of *vikarma*, sin? Surrender the lower to the higher! Give up to go forward!

Take the senses to reflection (mind), take the reflection (*manas*) to reason (*buddhi*), and when reason, too, is clouded, take it, through contemplation, to the Spirit,— the *Atman*

Arjuna! slay, then, *kama* by the *Atman* The Self will slay desires (*trishna*), *kama* (lust)

The way out of *vikarma* (sin) is the way of self-surrender to the Divine Spirit *Saranam gachchami!* Take refuge in the Self!

The senses are great Greater than the senses is the mind (*manas*) Greater than the mind is the reason (*buddhi*) Greater than the reason is the Spirit, the Supreme! [III 42]

CHAPTER 4

The Secret Doctrine

[1]

(1) The Gita is a Leader of Literature in spiritual philosophy Its language is simple but the simplicity springs from a hidden depth of wisdom

In the last section of Chapter III, Sri Krishna refers to the four centres of the organism of man —

- (i) the senses of the physical body,
- (ii) the *manas* (mind) which is, also, a “body”,— “noumenal body”, which is greater than the “senses”,
- (iii) the *buddhi* (reason) which is greater than the *manas* or nous, and
- (iv) the *Atman*, the Spirit, the Supreme, the Higher Self within This is greater than the *buddhi* (reason)

Kama or desire is the foe, and can be slain by the Higher Self

(2) This Secret is the Eternal Doctrine which, Krishna says, he taught in the ancient days to the great founder of the Indian race, to Vivasvan, the Sun-God And he taught it to Manu, and Manu taught it to Ikshvaku So was the Secret handed down by the *Raja Rishis* the *Royal Sages*, until by faithlessness in the

cycle of time, the Secret (*rahasyam*) was lost

This Secret is the "Imperishable *yoga*" which Sri Krishna again declares,— this time, to Arjuna, at once a friend (*sakha*) and a devotee (*bhakta*) of Krishna

This Secret Doctrine of the *yoga* includes the doctrine of *nishkama karma* (selfless action),— action in inaction and inaction in action,— the doctrine of living in the world yet remaining withdrawn, dwelling detached "in the Self" A man who liveth thus worketh in the world, yet holds nothing for himself'

In the Secret Doctrine of the *yoga* is emphasised the truth that the *Atman*, the Deathless Spirit, is the Supreme The *Atman* permeates all that is, permeates Man and Nature,— permeates the Cosmos *Ishavasyam idam sarvam*

The *Atman* is, therefore, the basis of all life and all knowledge In all, from the atom to man and the super-man, is the *Atman*, the Supreme Spirit

To study Nature is to discover God, the *Atman*

To know thyself, O Arjuna, is to know the God, the Divine Self within thee

[2]

(1) Arjuna is confounded Krishna belongs to my day, Arjuna thinks We have played and dined and walked together but the Sun-God, Vivasvan, took birth millions of years ago How could Krishna teach the Sun-God in that remote period? It was the beginning of the creation of the solar system

Arjuna expresses the doubt which disturbs his mind —

Later was thy birth, but earlier was the birth of the Sun-God (*Vivasvan*) How, then, am I to understand that thou didst declare the *yoga* at the beginning of creation? [IV. 4]

(2) In answer to Arjuna, Sri Krishna makes the supreme declaration of the doctrine of incarnation (*Avataravad*)

And in espousing the doctrine, Sri Krishna sets forth the great Mystery, the Mystery of all mystery, namely, his Eternal Birthlessness, his Divinity of Being

Krishna claims to be “the Lord of all beings” (*bhutanam Ishwaraha*), and gives a hint of the Mystery of Creation, pointing out that he is born, again and again, and enters into all creatures by the mystic power of the Eternal Thought. Yes, Krishna reflects Logos. The Lord reproduces Himself in all creatures.

(3) Krishna says he takes birth, again and again, [“I am born from age to age!”-IV 8], and always in a crisis.

Whenever there is decay of *dharma* (righteousness), O Arjuna¹ and there is exaltation of *adharma* (unrighteousness), then I project Myself [IV 7]

The crisis in which the *Avatara* appears is a crisis in the consciousness of humanity. The *Avatara* appears to make some new adjustment or development of humanity. The *Avatara* comes to set before us a model of divine life and divine work on this “dark planet”, to purify us by the light of knowledge and the divine effulgence of his Love, to call us to take refuge in the *Atman* and so as to enter into Krishna, the divine life.

(4) Threefold is the object of the *Avatara* —

(i) protection of the seekers of light and perfection, (*paritranaya sadhunam*),

(ii) overthrow of evil and darkness, and

(iii) re-establishment of *dharma*,— not a creed but a method and a vibration, a force and a way, a law of inner and outer living,— the God-ward Law.

These three indicate the purpose of Incarnation. This, too, is the purpose of every man’s life. for in every man dwells the Spirit, the *Atman*. Is not every man called upon (i) to be on the side of the forces of God, (ii) to fight the forces of evil, and (iii) to preserve the supremacy of *dharma*? What is *dharma*? Law, the divine law of life, which urges that Spirit should dominate matter.

(5) Yet there is a difference between our birth and Sri Krishna’s birth. His birth and action (*janma* and *karma*), Sri Krishna calls divine (*divyam*)

I am born through My Own Power (*atma-mayaya*) [IV 6]
We take birth, compelled by *trishna* (desire, craving). Krishna takes birth in mercy upon mankind, and Krishna’s body is made

by him by making use of his *maya-shakti*. Thus though Krishna is *Aja* (birthless), he manifests himself through the power of his *maya-shakti* for he is the Lord of *maya*. So we read in the *Purusha-Sukta* (a section of the *Samhita* of the *Rig Veda*) —

He who is *Prajapati* (Lord of creation) and is himself *Aja* (birthless), He enters into various wombs and takes birth in many shapes

Krishna takes birth by self-*maya* whenever *dharma* fades and *adharma* sweeps over the land. Krishna takes birth to deliver the Good, to destroy Evil, and to re-enthroned the Right, Law, *Dharma*.

In the ordinary mortal, *prarabdha* (action done in a previous birth which has begun to bear fruit) is an important factor in his destiny, and the *Purusha* is swayed by the *prakriti* through *avidya* (ignorance) but in the *Avatara* there is no *prarabdha* and no *samskaras* (seeds stored up), and the *prakriti*, devoid of egoism, reflects the light and will of the *Purusha*. In both, *maya* is the means of manifestation but in the *Avatara* the divine birth is by self-*maya* (*Atma-mayaya*). The normal birth is by lower *maya*, *avidya maya*, the *maya* of ignorance. The divine birth of the *Avatara* is by *yoga maya*, *vidya maya*, i.e. the power of Divine Consciousness, the power of the Godhead aware of its action and its purpose. In normal birth, nature-aspect is prominent; in the divine birth, God-aspect shows forth. In normal birth, human nature dominates; in the divine birth, *prakriti* reflects the Divine spirit.

(6) We must distinguish, then, between *vibhuti* and *Avatara*, between great men and Incarnations. Arjuna, Vyasa, Ushana were great souls (*Mahatmas*, *Mahapurushas*), but not *Avataras*. They had divine qualities but they had not the inner Divine Consciousness of Krishna (*Atmanam srajami*). The *Avatara* is a special manifestation of the divine birth from above.

(7) The *Avatara*, then, comes not by evolution or ascent but by a direct descent of the Divine Spirit in the type and form of man through *yoga-maya*, i.e. the power of a mould made by the Godhead, to redeem humanity.

The *Avatara* comes to call and draw men to the Divine Life. Whoever enters into communion with the Divine Life “cometh

not to birth again”

He is liberated, set free from the flesh He is freed from “passion, fear and anger” he is purified in the “fire of wisdom” Such a man, when quitting his mortal frame, enters no more the wheel of birth and death He is Krishna-filled he enters into the Divine Being of Krishna (*madbhavamagatah*)

He who thus knoweth My divine birth and divine action comes not to birth again, but cometh unto Me, O Arjuna!

Freedom from passion, fear and anger, filled with Me, taking refuge in Me, purified in the *tapas* of *gnana* (wisdom), many have entered into My Life Divine [IV 9, 10]

[3]

(1) The four *varnas* (social “types”) render the Path Krishna takes in mankind’s behalf different to each *varna* in principles and duties, according to the *gunas* of each *varna* Krishna is himself changeless and without action yet is he the Author of the *varna-gunas* (qualities) and actions

These four *varnas* are four types of life, four modes of living,—each being the product of a man’s thoughts and actions One man’s thoughts and actions manifest themselves in the form of a teacher (*brahmin*), another’s in the form of a warrior (*kshatrya*), another’s in the form of a merchant (*vaishya*), another’s in the form of an humble servant (*sudra*) But in each dwells the One God It is open to a *jiva* to become, according to his *gunas* (qualities), a *brahmin*, a *kshatrya*, a *vaishya*, or a *sudra*

The *varnas* are not castes, not rigid divisions, but social types, due to differences in *gunas* (qualities) The Marxian conception of “classless society” is not Sri Krishna’s conception Society cannot be “classless” nor must society be a rigid caste-cribbed convention The social life-force expresses itself as four types according to *gunas*, qualities and actions

Each *varna* has its own duties, its own task to fulfil, its own work to do, its own path to travel But all the paths converge to Krishna for he is the Author of the four *varnas* And in every path, he is the goal, the final end And he welcomes each *varna* on its own path However men worship, they still seek him, for our hearts are restless until they find their rest in him!

However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them for the path men take from every side is Mine, O Arjuna! [IV 11]

The four *varnas* (social types *brahmin*, *kshatrya*, *vaishya* and *sudra*) were by Me produced in accord with the different distribution of *gunas* (qualities) and actions. Know Me to be the Author (*Kartaram*) of them, though I am actionless (*akarta*) and inexhaustible (*avyayam*) [IV 13]

(2) Krishna proceeds to explain this paradox how being actionless, he becomes the Author of actions and qualities. He is actionless, he rests above action, he is unaffected by action, he is without expectation of results of action. He is detached, and so is not held by the bonds of action. He acts, but as he acts without desire, without egoism, without any the least thought of personal reward or fruit, his actions do not bind him down to re-birth.

(3) So may we understand what is action by performing which a man may be redeemed from the bonds of *karma* and re-birth. Krishna does not recommend abstaining from physical activity. Is such a thing possible? And may not such abstaining mean tumult and struggle within?

Krishna asks us to work in detachment and peace. Work! Do your duties! Don't cut yourself off from humanity! Thus may you be free through doing work and thus, when you are free, you may continue to work.

Work, freed from selfish desire! Work, asking nothing for yourself! Thus may you find action in inaction and inaction in action. Thus may you be a free man. For, while engaged in action, you are unsolicitous of results, and so, while in action, you really are "doing nothing." You live in joy, above all sense-enjoyment. Every act of yours is an offering to God. Your action becomes a *yagna*—you are ever engaged in works of sacrifice (*yagna*).

The man of illumination, *gnana*, wisdom, is the man whose life is a sacrifice (*yagna*). Such a man, having done *varna*-duties, attains at last the master-*varna*,—the spiritual order of the mystic. He endures unto the end every ordeal and trial on the path of *yagna* (sacrifice), until he enters into the Mysteries and attains to *Nirvana*!

He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise (*buddhiman*) He is harmonious (*yuktah*), even while performing all actions

Whose works are all free from the moulding of desire (*karma samkalpa*), whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom (*gnana-agni*), him the wise have called a Sage!

Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of action (*karma-phalla*), he is not doing anything, although doing actions Building no castles in the air, devoid of *asha* (vain hopes), controlling his mind and self (*chitta* and *atman*), abandoning all greed (*parigraha*), doing action by the body alone (*sariram kevalam karma kurvam*), he committeth no sin (*kilbisham*)

Free from the pairs of opposites (*dwanda*), balanced (*sama*) in success and failure, though acting, he is not bound (*ni badhyaha*)

With attachment dead, with his thoughts abiding in *gnana* (wisdom), all his actions, sacrifices (*yagnaya charatah*), melt away [IV 18-23]

[4]

(1) As a burnt-offering is consumed in the fire, so are all actions, works, offered to the Eternal, absorbed in the Eternal, the Supreme they do not bind And the offering of such works,—the works which are sacrifices,—ascends to the Supreme Spirit, the Eternal For his life is a perpetual sacrifice to God The Flame of such a sacrificial life ascends, unceasingly, to the Supreme

In such a life,—the life of self-abnegation,—“the Eternal is the oblation offered in the Eternal Fire by the Eternal” He who, in his daily life, meditates wholly upon the Eternal, seeing the One *Atman* beneath the passing, the transitory, goes to the Eternal Others are *karma*-bound their actions bind them to the world of forms, the *mrityu-loka*

Unto the Eternal, verily, shall he go who in his action, meditateth wholly upon the Eternal [IV 24]

(2) Sri Krishna next mentions some of the various kinds of sacrifice, *yagna*, to the Gods These different *yagnas* to the Gods

arise out of the fact that all men are not, in actual life, in the same stage of evolution. Men, according to *gunas* and *prakriti*, belong to different *varnas* and offer different sacrifices to the Gods.

Some offer the "sacrifice of the senses" — they control by *tapasya* their hearing, etc.

Some offer the sacrifice of "the functions of the senses and the functions of life (*prana*)" — these are the sacrifices of sense-delights.

Some offer the sacrifice of wealth, some of mortification (*tapas*), some of *yoga*, some of *swadhyaya* (silent reading), some of *gnana* (wisdom), some of *pranayama* (breath-control), some of *ahara*, food (fasting).

All these sacrifices (*yagnas*), when done in sincerity, help the seeker on the path. They are a step towards Liberation.

And all these sacrifices are born of action (*karma*) and are "spread out before the Eternal". Whoever, then, does his work honestly, trusting in God, and is not worried about reward or results, is doing "sacrificial work" — for his work is consecrated to the Supreme.

(3) But the sacrifice of wisdom (*gnana-yagna*) i.e. knowledge consecrated to the Supreme, is superior to "sacrifice of any objects", or material things.

Yet the value of the "sacrifices of objects" must not be underestimated. For such sacrifices purify the doer and gradually open up his centre of illumination and so become a means of Liberation.

Better than the sacrifice of any objects is the sacrifice of wisdom. O Arjuna! all actions in their entirety culminate in wisdom. [IV 33]

[5]

(1) Seek, then, wisdom, O Arjuna !

And wisdom will be awakened in you by the wise. They are the *gnanins*, *tatva darshanah*, the seers of *tatva* (essence of life).

Three things are essential to him who would have wisdom.

(i) Humility (*pranipata*) — To a disciple is taught wisdom and

he should have humility

(ii) Investigation (*pariprashna*) He must seek wisdom by diligent search

(iii) Service (*seva*) He must serve his Guru

Learn wisdom thou by discipleship, by investigation and by service The wise, the seers of the Essence, will instruct thee in wisdom, O Arjuna! [IV. 34]

(2) This wisdom is spiritual knowledge It reveals the fact of unity Of cosmical significance is this fact You see the unity of all creatures in the *Atman*, the Self, the Spirit, and so in Krishna

O Pandava! By wisdom thou wilt see all beings without exception in the Self and thus in Me! [IV. 35]

(1) This wisdom is the boat, the raft (*plava*) by which you cross over all sin Is not sin due to separateness? You rise above it with a realisation of the One *Atman* in all

(ii) This wisdom is the fire perpetually burning, reducing to ashes all actions (*karma*), and purifying the performer of actions

When purified, he hath mastery over his senses, and he is full of faith (*shraddha*) he attains to a state of perfect devotion Then knowledge springs up spontaneously in him he sees it in the Self

(iii) This wisdom leadeth to the supreme Peace (*parama shantim*) whereas the ignorant, full of doubt (*sanshaya*) and without faith (*ashradhanah*), are lost The man of doubtful mind hath no happiness in this world or the next

Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet shalt thou cross over all sin by the raft of wisdom

As the burning fire reduces fuel to ashes, so doth the wisdom reduce, O Arjuna! all actions to ashes

Verily, there is no purifier in this world like wisdom,

The man who is full of faith obtaineth wisdom and he, also, who hath mastery over his senses And having obtained wisdom, he goeth swiftly to the supreme Peace

But the ignorant man, devoid of faith and doubting, goeth to destruction Nor this world, nor that beyond, nor happiness anywhere, is there for him who doubts [IV. 36-40]

(3) The man of wisdom is a free man. No actions bind him

For, while performing action, he hath renounced action No actions come back on him as error or fruitlessness He is free of actions, whilst performing action for his actions arise from spiritual knowledge and are an oblation in the fire of perpetual sacrifice in the Eternal, the Supreme Spirit

And' such a man hath cut asunder all doubt by knowledge Arjuna' cut asunder with the sword of wisdom (*gnana*) the doubt which dwells in thy heart It is a doubt born of ignorance (*agnana*) Arjuna' arise and act '

With the sword of knowledge of the Self (*Atman*), cleaving asunder this ignorance-born doubt dwelling in thy heart, be established in *yoga*' Stand up, O Arjuna' [IV 42]

CHAPTER 5

The Path of Renunciation

[1]

Srī Kṛṣṇa has so far spoken at once for *karma yoga* and of *sanyasa yoga*. *Karma yoga* is *karma* performed as *yoga*. *Karma yoga* is action which is dedicated. *Sanyasa yoga* is the *yoga* which is attained through *sanyasa* or renunciation. So it is that Arjuna has a doubt again. And he frankly puts it before the Master.

Kṛṣṇa has spoken of *sankhya* and *yoga*, of *gnana* and *karma*, of knowledge and work. And between the two Arjuna sees an insuperable contradiction. For the *sankhya* doctrine of knowledge advocates renunciation of action, and the *yoga* doctrine advocates right performance of action. Yet Kṛṣṇa says that both are good, that both the paths (*gnana* and *karma*) lead man to the highest state.

Arjuna is not satisfied. He wants definite guidance as to what he should do. Should Arjuna renounce his *karma* as a warrior and follow the line of *sanyasa* (as taught by *sankhya*)? Or should he do his *karma* as a *kshatriya* and carry the fight to a finish (as taught by *yoga*)? Which of the two,—renunciation and work,—should Arjuna follow?

Surely, the belief among many Hindus was that through

sanyasa could one attain to liberation. If so, Arjuna's *kshatrya*-work should stand in the way of his liberation. In which case, Arjuna is prepared to give up his work as a *kshatrya*, and practise renunciation as a *sanyasin*. Arjuna wants to know definitely what he should do.

Renunciation of actions (*sanyasa*) thou praisest, O Krishna! and, also, the right performance of action (*yoga*). Of the two, (*sanyasa* and action), which one is the better? That tell me conclusively [V 1]

Krishna does not wish to encourage Arjuna to blindly accept any view. Krishna understands that Arjuna has the weakness which so many have to regard renunciation as superior to work. So Krishna thinks it best to explain to Arjuna what real *sanyasa* (renunciation) is, and thus to help Arjuna to make his own choice.

[2]

(1) Know then this, O Arjuna! that *karma-yoga* (work) and *sanyasa-yoga* (renunciation) are not contraries leading to different goals. *Karma* or work and *sankhya* (knowledge) or renunciation both are means to liberation.

The value of work is not in its results but in the spirit in which it is done,— the right spirit being that which offers work as an incense to the Eternal. Only so may work purify the worker and become a self-discipline in the process of self-unfoldment.

Work has its value in the measure in which it expresses spiritual life, the life of the *Atman*. Such work, itself, is *sanyasa*, renunciation. For the worker, the *yogi*, has renounced all thought of result or fruits of action.

(2) *Karma*, done in the spirit of *yoga*, is detached, and *sanyasa* (renunciation) really means non-attachment, absence of *raga* and *dvesha*, of selfish love and hate. The man who does *karma* as a *yoga*, the *karma-yogin*, the true *yogi*, acts, but he neither seeks nor rejects objects. He rises above *dwandas* (pairs of opposites), likes and dislikes, etc. He neither seeks nor rejects. He is desireless. So *karma* has no bonds for him. He has broken the bonds which tie one to the world. And such an one is the true *sanyasin*. The *yogi*, the *karma-yogi*, is a *sanyasin*.

Children, not sages, speak of *sankhya* and *yoga* as different. He who is established in one, obtains the fruits of both.

The supreme state which is gained by the *sankhyas* is reached by the *yogis*, also. He seeth who seeth that the *sankhya* and the *yoga* are one. [V 4, 5]

(3) A *karma* (action) becomes a cause leading to another *karma* (action), which is its effect, and so is created a chain of causation which drags us to births and deaths. But it is not *karma* (action) *per se*, in itself, which creates the chain of causation. The chain is created really by *raga* and *dvesha*, false love and hatred.

Work, in itself, does not bind. It is *trishna* (desire) which binds. Learn to work without any *trishna*, any attachment to the fruit, and you will not be subject to the cycle of causation. Far from being a source of bondage, such work, *karma*, offered as a *yagna*, sacrifice to the Lord, will be a step to self-realisation. Desireless action does not bind.

The man who is *yoga-yukta*, "harmonised by *yoga*", is the man of purified heart and controlled body and restrained senses. His only self is the Self of all creatures. Such a man is unaffected by action.

He who is harmonised by *yoga*, the self-purified, self-ruled, the sense subdued, whose self is the Self of all beings, although acting, he is not affected. [V 7]

(4) Why is he not affected by action? Because he acts not for himself. The *Atman*, the higher Self,— the Krishna within him,— is the performer of his actions.

He, the individual man, has renounced all action of his own volition. He hath, through *sankhya*, knowledge and meditation, slain the organs and senses. He hath destroyed the functions of action in himself. His body and mind and *buddhi* are set in motion not by himself but by the energy of Krishna within him.

He sees, he hears, he touches, he smells, he eats, he moves, he sleeps, he breathes, he speaks. But he understands that this is so because motions of the senses and organs are directed by natural impulse to their appropriate objects. He knows the divine truth that he is doing nothing. Krishna does all actions in him.

“I do not anything”, thinks the *yoga-yukta* (the harmonised one) Such a man knows the secret (*tatvavit*) Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing eyes, he understands that the senses move among the objects of the senses [V 8, 9]

(5) Such a man is “unaffected by sin as is a lotus leaf by the waters” [V 10] Pure in heart, he does actions with his body, his mind, his reason (*buddhi*), with an entire oblivion and absense of motive, self-interest, desire His actions are of the purest character, the most perfect in quality For he is, practically, an instrument of an Interior Force prompting and actuating his actions,— a Force emanating from Krishna within

(6) Such a man attains to the eternal Peace He dwells serenely in the nine-gated city, *nava-dware puri*, the body, which is a city of the Eternal He dwells serenely, for he neither acts, nor causes to act He has obtained tranquillity He may well enter the *Para-nirvana*,— the Peace wherein abide the liberated ones beyond this life But he remains in this body, in the city of the nine senses for the benefit of mankind He remains here a *jiwan-mukta*, a Master to bless and teach and illuminate the lives of *jignasus*, the seekers of the light.

The *yoga-yukta* (harmonised man) attaineth to the Eternal Peace

Renouncing all actions, mentally, he resteth serenely in the nine-gated city He is the sovereign dweller in the body And he neither acteth nor doth he cause to act [V 12, 13]

Such a blessed one is the true *sanyasin* In small things as in great, he trusts in God, he relies on God, he gives all his actions to God, and so is not worried about his fate in this world or any other world He does not worry himself even about his *mukti* (liberation) He knows that, in the Providence of the Lord who is too wise to err, too loving to forget, there is *mukti* for all He has attained to *yogic* peace He is free!

[3]

Krishna within is the prompter of the actions of his devoted disciple,— the *yogi*, who becomes an instrument of the Lord . but

Krishna is not the creator of actions nor of its fruits. Actions and their fruits are manifestations of nature, *swabhava*. Its three *gunas* (qualities) are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. From these three spring actions.

The *yogi* of wisdom, the free man, is a man of true *sanyasa* or renunciation. He hath renounced actions. He hath transcended the three *gunas*. He stands above nature. He has surrendered himself to the *Atman*, the Krishna within him.

The *yogi* acts not. What appear to be his actions are really manifestations of the Krishna-energy within him.

Neither *papa* (sin) nor *sukrita* (virtue) goeth unto the Lord. He accepts him who rises above vice and virtue, and goes to the Lord in absolute self-surrender (*saranam gachchami*). The *yogi*, the man of true renunciation, is the man of self-surrender.

But the vast majority of men, not treading the path of true *yoga*, are under the influence of *agnana* (unwisdom). Truth is for them beclouded by ignorance, tainted by the flesh. So are they led astray, and they fall in the snare of delusion.

The Lord of the world (*Prabhu*) produced not the idea of agency (*kartritnam*), nor of actions (*karma*), nor of the union (*sanyoga*) of action and its fruit (*karma-phala*). Nature (*swabhava*), verily, manifesteth.

And the Lord accepts neither evil-doing (*papam*) nor yet the virtue (*sukritam*) of any. But wisdom is enveloped (*avritam*) by unwisdom. So are mortals deluded! [V 14, 15]

[4]

Blessed are they who walk not the way of the majority. Blessed are they who attain to wisdom, knowledge of the *Atman*, the true Self, Krishna within. They are the *yogis*. As the light of the sun disperses darkness and reveals the beauty of the world, so does the light of wisdom (*gnana*) disperse all ignorance and reveal the Supreme to the true *yogi*.

Such true *yogis*,— men of true *sanyasa*, sons of the Light, sages of illumination,— live and move in the Supreme (*Tatparam*). They think on That, and are devoted to That. And when they leave this mortal body, they go to the Abode whence there is no return to this wheel of birth and death.

Such sages are free from all preferences, prejudices and predilections. They are *sama darshi* they see the One Self (*Atman*) in a cow, an elephant and a dog,— the One Krishna in a selfless *brahmin* and an outcast who eats the flesh of dogs. Such sages have equal or balanced consciousness. And they rest in the Eternal (*Brahman*) who is the *samam* (balanced)

Such yogis rejoice not over pleasant things (*priyam*) nor grieve over the unpleasant (*apriyam*). All their joy is in the Self, the *Atman*, in the divine union with the Krishna within. Not in the delights arising from the attraction of the senses or contact with external objects, not in these ephemeral and impermanent enjoyments is their joy. They know that the things of the earth are wombs of pain (*dukha yonaya*), for they have a beginning and an ending (*adi-anta*). Knowing this, they fight and conquer the force of desire and passion (*kama-krodha*). They conquer by self-surrender. They give the reins of the three horses, the three *gunas*, in the hands of Krishna. They seek joy within (*antaha sukha*) they rejoice within (*antara-ramah*). They are interiorly illumined. They rise above the three *gunas* of nature and partake of super-nature, the divine nature of the Supreme. They become of the Eternal (*Brahmabhutah*). They are assimilated with the Supreme.

And the time they stay in this body upon the earth they are devoted to welfare of all beings (*sarva bhutahite ratah*)

Verily, in whom unwisdom is destroyed by the wisdom of the *Atman*, in them wisdom, shining as the sun, reveals the Supreme.

Thinking on That, merged in That, solely devoted to That, they go whence there is no return.

Such sages look equally on a *brahmin* adorned with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a *shvapaka*, outcast.

Even here on earth, with their mind balanced, they are established in the Eternal Brahman who is balanced.

[V. 16-19]

He who is happy within, who rejoiceth within, who is illumined within, that yogi, becoming Brahman (the Eternal), goes to the Peace of the Eternal (*Brahmaniravana*)

[V. 24]

To everyone who knoweth his Self (*Atman*), cometh the benediction of the Peace of the Eternal (*Brahma-nirvanam*) For this knowledge is wisdom It drives out desire and passion It makes a man subdued in nature and of subdued thoughts

The process of subdual is helped on by *pranayama*, breath-control He who would practise *pranayama* is asked —

(1) to exclude external contacts,

(2) to fix his gaze between the eye-brows, and

(3) to make equal the outgoing and ingoing breaths (*prana* and *apana*) moving within the nostrils

But the essential thing is to liberate the senses, mind and *buddhi* (reason) from the dominion of desires and to set free his nature from fear and passion

Above all, he must know Krishna as the Assimilator of all *yagna* and *tapas* (sacrifice and austerity), and as the Lord of all the worlds (*sarva-loka*) and the Lover of all the beings

He, then, who knoweth the *Atman* (higher Self) and, through the *Atman*, masters the lower self of senses, mind and reason, he goeth to Peace He is eternally blessed!

With senses, mind and reason ever controlled, solely pursuing liberation (*mokshaparanah*), the sage (*muni*), having for ever cast away desire, fear and passion verily is liberated

Having known Me as the Assimilator (*bhokta*) of sacrifice and of austerity, as the Ruler of all the worlds and the Lover of all beings, he goeth to peace (*shanti*) [V 28, 29]

CHAPTER 6

The Path Of Meditation

[1]

(1) Krishna re-emphasises the truth that true *sanyasa* or renunciation is *yoga*

And *sanyasa* or renunciation is not in this, that the *sanyasi* lights no sacrificial fire (*agni*) and performs no ceremonies (*akriyaha*) Renunciation or *sanyasa* is in this, that the man, in all his actions (*karma*), gives up the desire for fruit of action (*karma-phala*) *Sanyasa* is non-attachment *sanyasa* is desirelessness

And this, too, is *sanyasa* or renunciation,— the giving up of *sankalpa* (planning for the future, building up castles in imagination)

This *sanyasa* calls for practice of action Action without desire for fruit is, indeed, a means to the beginning in *yoga*, as to him who is established in *yoga* (*yoga-rudhah*), serenity (*shamah*) is the means and serenity comes through abandonment of *sankalpa* We plan and disturb the inner peace of the heart

He who is enthroned in *yoga* (*yoga-rudhah*), renounces *sankalpa* and abides in meditation (*dhyana*)

He that acts independently of the fruit of action, he is a true

sanyasi not he who lights no sacrificial fire and performs no ceremonies

Verily, true renunciation is *yoga*, O Arjuna! And he is not a true *yogi* who hath not renounced *sankalpa*.

For a sage who is seeking *yoga*, action is the means. for him who is enthroned in *yoga*, serenity is the means

Renouncing *sankalpa*, the sage is said to be enthroned in *yoga* [VI 1-4]

(2) Meditation is reaching the higher Self, the *Atman*. You reach the *Atman* after the lower self is curbed. The lower self is desire-dominated. This desire-self must be restrained by the *Atman*, the higher Self. So may one be raised above the sense-life to meditation or life in God, the *Atman*.

To him who has conquered himself and risen to meditation, the *Atman*,— the higher Self,— is the friend. But to him who is not self-conquered, his worst foe is the self of desires.

Verily is the Self the friend of the self and also the Self is the self's enemy.

The Self is the friend of the self of him in whom the self by the Self is vanquished. But to the unsubdued self, the Self, verily, is hostile as an enemy. [VI. 5, 6]

The *yogi* of meditation subdues his senses. he is rock-seated (*kutastha*) i.e. unwavering, and he is equal-minded in "cold and heat", "pleasure and pain", "honour and dishonour", "all pairs of opposites". And a lump of earth and a stone and gold are to him the same. He looks with the same *buddhi* (*samabuddhi*), i.e. impartially upon all, friends and foes, strangers and neutrals, foreigners and relatives, the righteous and unrighteous.

[2]

(1) The *yogi* of meditation rests in the Supreme

Therefore,

(i) he goes, again and again, in solitude and seclusion

(ii) He makes a seat for himself in a pure place. His seat is neither very much raised nor very low. The seat is made of a cloth, a black antelope skin and *kusha*-grass, one over the other.

(iii) He sits steady on his seat and tries to make the mind one-

pointed he aims at self-purification

(iv) He holds the body, head and neck erect, steady, immovable He looks fixedly at the point of the nose (*nasikagram*)

(v) He is firm in the vow of the *brahmachari*, the vow of purity and continence

(vi) He thinks on Krishna and aspires after Krishna

(2) Discipline of body and the senses is necessary to the *yoga* of meditation This discipline is based on the law of moderation The *yogi's* is the middle path

There are people who do not walk the middle path They think the *yogi* should be able to live without food, to rise in the air, to fly through space, to be proof against poisons The true *yogi*, however, does not seek the supernatural powers for he knows that the body will still be perishable He knows that true power, *shakti*, *siddhi*, is of the soul The *yogi* is not a magician and he does not seek miraculous feats

He who would attain to meditation must walk the middle path He must not be immoderate in food or fasting, in sleep or vigil He must eat neither too much nor too little he must sleep neither too much nor too little He regulates eating and sleeping, walking and working He disciplines his appetites and does not deplete himself by excess or self-mortification He is a man of divine discipline and so takes the mean between indulgence and asceticism He maintains moderation in eating and recreation, in sleeping and waking, in exertions of actions, in speech and silence, in labour and rest His day-to-day life shows the absence of excitement and nervousness, of indiscretion and idle talk, of indulgence and self-torture He knows no excess in action

The man of meditation attains to self-restraint and so knows no pain produced by actions of the uncontrolled,— pain due to restlessness, discontent, self-reproach, grief, anger and fear

Verily, *yoga* is not for him who eateth too much, nor for him who abstaineth to excess *yoga* is not for him who is too much addicted to sleep, nor even for him who is addicted to wakefulness, O Arjuna!

Yoga killeth out pain (*yoga bhavati dukkaha*) for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, in activity, in sleeping and waking [VI 16, 17]

(3) Discipline of the mind is, also, necessary to the *yoga* of meditation

Such a *yogi* is centered in the Self. He is free from attachment to desire. He is at rest. He is as the flame of a lamp which is sheltered from the wind in a windless place and flickereth not. The flame is not extinguished but steadied. So the *yogi* does not suppress all thoughts. he thinks of God!

By the practice of this *yoga* of meditation he attains rest, assimilating himself with the higher Self. Thus does he attain to the bliss which is boundless. Nothing disturbs this bliss. for nothing moves him. He is not shaken even by heavy sorrow. The *yogi* does not kill all joy. he has his joy unending in God, and in God or *Atman* has the joy of divine peace.

As a lamp in a windless place flickereth not, so such is likened the *yogi* of subdued thought, absorbed in the *yoga* of the *Atman*. [VI 19]

(4) Thus having subdued the senses and organs, having extinguished desire, having slain all *sankalpa*, the *yogi* of meditation is at rest in the *Atman*, the higher Self, the true Self, the Krishna within. He is in union with the Supreme.

He seeth the unity of all things. He sees Krishna in all things and all things in Krishna. And, knowing this spiritual unity, he worshippeth Krishna and he liveth in Krishna, whatsoever his outer condition be. He seeth the One Self shining in the heart of each, One Essence in all things. He sees that the Original Form of all beings and creatures is in the likeness (*upama*) of the *Atman*, notwithstanding all pain and evil that seem so incongruous in a world of which the hidden Essence is He, Krishna!

Herein lies the secret of love, patience, endurance and all the virtues and qualities of wisdom which the *yogi* has developed in himself through assimilation with the Krishna, the Centre of his being. All that comes to him, *sukha* or *dukkha*, is the same to him. He accepts it all with equanimity. In *sukha* and *dukkha* he seeth equality (*samam*).

Such a state is *samādhi*, a state of perpetual divine presence, divine life, and divine peace. It is the highest state.

[3]

(1) Krishna's picture of the man of meditation who lives in a state of perpetual divine presence is so beautiful, so finished, so perfect, that Arjuna despairs of it. Such a man is so self-restrained, so senseless of suffering that he has total absence of the ordinary natural human qualities such as resentment, anger, sense of injury. Such a man has such self-composure that he is not startled even by disasters, injuries, personal attacks, persecutions, adversity. Such a state Arjuna thinks he cannot attain.

Arjuna asks — "Master! the *yoga* of meditation thou hast declared to be the *yoga* of equanimity (*sama yoga*). I do not see that I can ever attain to this *yoga*, for I find that the mind is restless, full of agitation, turbulent, strong and obstinate. To restrain it is as difficult as to curb the storm (*vayu*)."

This *yoga* which thou hast declared to be by equanimity, O Krishna! I see not a stable foundation for it, owing to restlessness.

For the mind is verily restless, O Krishna! It is impetuous, strong and difficult to bend. I deem it hard to curb the mind as the wind. [VI 33, 34]

(2) Krishna replies that the mind truly is restless and hard to restrain.

But it may be restrained and the *yoga* of meditation attained by two disciplines —

(i) *abhyasa*, constant practice, and

(ii) *vairagya*, dispassion, detachment, desirelessness.

This double divine discipline will break down and destroy the lower self,— to which belongs the mind. Difficult is this discipline, but it is attainable by him who controls himself through properly directed energy.

(3) Arjuna has a feeling that in most men such perfect control or self-restraint would take far longer than the span of one life-

time So he asks — What is the fate of a man who has faith (*shraddha*) but has not perfect control? His mind, being unsubdued, wanders away from *yoga* and fails to attain to perfection (*yoga samadhi*) He can but partially practise *yoga* What becomes of him? Is he, like a broken cloud, doomed to destruction? He has *shraddha*, faith in the Path of the Eternal (*Brahmanah pathi*) but he has stumbled, again and again, into snares of delusion, and he quits the mortal life still in an imperfect state Does such a man perish?

(4) To Arjuna, Krishna gives an answer which fills us with hope

(i) Such a man does not perish here or hereafter Whatever progress is made is never lost And he who does good never treads the path of woe (*durgatim*)

(ii) He who takes the Path, even though weakly and with frequent falls, yet ever persevering and bringing, again and again, his inconstant mind to the Lord, on quitting the mortal life before reaching the end of the Path, passes through the middle region (astral plane), until he is qualified to rise to Heaven (*Devachan*), or if he is qualified for Heaven in the moment of his death, he goes straight to Heaven,— the “worlds of pure-doing” (*punya krtam-loka*)

Heaven or *Devachan* is a collective term for the many worlds of pure-doing “In my Father’s House are many mansions,” said Isa In one of these “mansions” in the *Devachan*, the *jignasu* dwells for an immensity of years, immemorial years (*shash-vateeh samah*)

(iii) When these years are over, he, the *yoga-bhrishta*, the man fallen from *yoga*, is born again in a pure and blessed house, it may be in a family of *yogis*, (*yoginameva kuli*) a family of the spiritually illuminated

(iv) Under such conditions of re-birth he finds correspondences in his environment to the knowledge attained by him in his former body. These correspondences of environment help him to recover characteristics belonging to his former body (*paurvadehikam*) His past life’s *abhyasa* (practice) is thus awakened He is led on in his destiny He reaches the supreme goal (*paramgatim*). This Goal goes beyond the Brahmic

world (*Sabda Brahma*),— the world of which the students of the letter of *Vedas* speak

Thus whatever progress is made in this life by the *yoga-bhrishta* is never lost His efforts are taken from life to life and world to world, until he reaches the Supreme The gain once made by him is ever his,— a part of his eternal life

(v) The *yogi* of meditation may take long to tread the Path His labours may continue through many births He may become a *yoga-bhrishta* But he attains, at last, to the Eternal

The ascetic (*tapasvi*) or anchorite inflicts severe penances on his body but greater than the *tapasvi* is the *yogi* of meditation

The knower of the *Vedas* (*gnani*) is great, indeed but greater still is the *yogi* of meditation.

The *karmi*, the man of activity, too, is great but greater than he is the true *yogi* of meditation

Tapasya, knowledge of the *Vedas*, and activity are all aids to spiritual unfolding but all the three find their fulfilment in the *yogi* of meditation, who lives perpetually in the divine presence He beholds Krishna within himself and adores the Lord in all Such a *yogi* sees the Light of the *Atman* in his own heart and in the face of all creatures, all beings Be thou such a *yogi*, an illumined one, O Arjuna!

The *yogi* is greater than the *tapasvi* (ascetic) the *yogi* is greater even than the Vedic scholar the *yogi* is greater than the *karmi* (man of activity) Therefore, become thou a *yogi*, O Arjuna!

And among all *yogis*, he who, full of faith, with the innermost heart fixed on Me, adoreth Me,— he is deemed by Me to be the most completely harmonised (*yuktamah*), the most devoted

[VI 46, 47]

CHAPTER 7

The Cycle Of Manifestation

[1]

Chapter VII is called *gnana-vignana yoga*

What is the difference between *gnana* and *vignana*?

To know the essence (*tatva*) of *Nirguna Nirakara Parmatman* is *gnana*, to know the *lêla* of *Saguna Sakara* is *vignana*

The *Nirguna Parmatman* is named *Brahman* (to be distinguished from *Brahma*,— a god) The *Saguna* is named *Bhagwan* Knowledge of *Brahman* is *gnana* . knowledge of *Bhagwan's swarupa* and *prabhava* (power) is *vignana*

Bhagwan is manifested God Krishna claims to be He Knowledge (*gnana*) becomes “realisation” when we see the Eternal (*Brahman*) on the plane of manifestation

In Chapter VII, then we read of *Brahman* and of *Bhagwan* and of the four types of persons (*adhikaris*) who worship Him

This Krishna-knowledge comes when the *jignasu* (the seeker) becomes an initiate “With this knowledge of Krishna there is nothing more here needeth to be known”[VII 2] This Krishna-knowledge is All-knowledge It is the knowledge of the divine centre of Arjuna, and, indeed, of all mankind it is infinite

divine knowledge

Not Arjuna alone, but all mankind may attain this knowledge,— the Krishna-knowledge,— if they will but resolve to tread the path that leadeth unto the perfect life. It is the end of man's *karma*. Alas! men walk their way of ease and comfort, but do not tread the path that leadeth unto the perfect life

Among thousands of men, scarce one striveth for perfection and among those so striving, scarce one cometh to the knowledge of Me as I am,— scarce one knoweth Me in essence [VII 3]

He knoweth who, giving up attachment to *jagat* (the world), takes refuge in Krishna, is devoted to Him with *manah* (mind) and *buddhi* (intuition) and ever dwells in thought and action on Him. But rare is such a man

Men do not realise the value of *manukh-dehi* (human birth). One is born a man to practise the *sadhanas* (spiritual disciplines) for attaining to the Eternal. Even the *devas* (gods) have not the opportunities, as have men, to grow in purity and self-control. For the twain demand conquest of the flesh and the *devas* have no flesh, no *sthula sarira*. Human beings have flesh but many, alas! have not *shradha*, *bhakti* in the Lord, nor fellowship with a *sat-purukha* (an advanced soul). Many succumb to egoism, desire and *sanga dvesha* (influence of environment)

[2]

Krishna proceeds to tell about Himself "as He is"

Krishna's nature (*prakriti*) is two-fold there is His "inferior" *prakriti* and there is His "higher" *prakriti*

(1) Inferior *prakriti* is *apara prakriti* (matter). It is *jad prakriti*. It is the *kshetra* (the field) it is *avyakta* (unmanifest subtle body) of *Brahman*. It is *maya* with its three *gunas*. It has eight divisions —

(i) 5 natural units — earth, water, air, fire, and ether (*akasa, kham*) . they are *pancha tanmatras*, *sukshama pancha mahabhutas* and

(ii) 3 others — mind (*manah*), reason (*buddhi*), and ego (*ahankara*). These are the three divisions of *antah-karan*

These eight elements are all perishable The *prakṛiti* of every man has these eight divisions,— all perishable

(2) Higher or superior *prakṛiti* is *para prakṛiti*, *daivi prakṛiti*, shining *prakṛiti*, *chaitana prakṛiti* It is the *jīva*, life force It is *kshetragna* It is the life (*jīva*) of all *bhūtas* (beings) It unifies It upholds (*dhāryahe*) the world Without *chaitana* (consciousness), the world would not be! It is the basis and sustainer of the universe It is the “breath” of beings. It is the “womb of all creatures” (*yoniṁ bhūtānāṁ*) It is the “string”, the “thread” (*sūtra*) on which all the “precious gems” of manifested existence hang

All this is threaded on Me, as rows of pearls on a string (*sūtra manigana iva*) [VII 7]

[3]

All things and all beings have come out of God Without Him there is nothing *Māyā* is the “Mother” Krishna is the “Father” of manifestation “I am the Father who lays the seed”

As the rays of the sun come out of the one sun and are part of the sun, so do all beings and all things come out of the One Lord All things are rays of God! Each soul is a ray of the Lord. God is the “essence” of all

The universe moves in cycles There is the cycle of manifestation (evolution) there is the cycle of *pralaya* (involution) The cycles and cycle law are due to the Lord As clouds are born of the sky and dwell in the sky and vanish in the sky, so are all the worlds born in the Lord they dwell in the Lord they disappear in the Lord.

I am the source of the forthgoing of the whole universe and likewise the place of its dissolving (*prabhavaḥ* and *pralayaḥ*) [VII 6]

Each soul is a ray of God and has its origin in God Each soul will realise God One God is in all

Manifestation begins when the One becomes two,— matter and life,— a body and a soul Matter, body, is the physical form the life is the in-dwelling soul All beings in manifestation are prompted by an in-dwelling soul

There is evolution and there is involution The world is like a tree,— an Aswatha Tree It has growth it has decay There are periods of childhood, youth, manhood, and old age in history There are seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter

In winter there is disintegration of customs and morals, of faith and piety, of family and state And in winter cometh the *Avatara* to renew and re-vitalise the eternal life of religion, the *Sanatana Dharma*

So it goes on,— until the “day” is over The universe has “day” and “night” The “day” is evolution the “night” is involution In the “day” there are cultures and civilisations, arts and sciences, kingdoms and conflicts,— the whole procession of history

After the cycle of evolution comes the cycle of the “night”, involution,— when all things, all institutions enter into *pralaya* (dissolution) and all men go into it,— all, except *Krishna-bhaktas*, devotees of the Lord They go to the Abode of the Lord they are freed from the wheel of birth and death Except these *bhaktas*, all men and all things go into *pralaya* and then come back into manifestation So it goes on,— the play of the Lord, His *leela*

In this play, the *apara prakriti*, (five natural units, “objects”, and three other units, “injects”) and *para-prakriti* (consciousness) have their inter-relations The support of them all is the Lord Out of the *apara-prakriti* are the three *gunas*, and out of them are all things The Lord, too, is the support of the *gunas*, yet is He above them He transcends them

But men, alas! are under delusion, and know not Krishna, the Lord This delusion of men is due to the divine illusion, *maya* It is *daivi maya*, says Krishna It is not a *sadharana* (ordinary) *maya* like the juggler’s trick or the *asura*’s magic It is “My *maya*,” says the Lord “I am the Lord, the *Swami, Mayapati* ”

Deluded men depend upon their own natural qualities, the three *gunas*, and not upon Krishna Men are entangled in the “snares of delusion”, and so men build up a false ego-personality, a degenerate “self”, corrupt and of the flesh Alas! men forget the Lord who dwells deep in the cavern of the soul Yet they “who come to Me”, come to the Krishna hidden deep in their hearts, “they cross over this *maya* (illusion) ” Such men are so few So

many are without spiritual discernment they embrace the nature of demons (*asuram bhavam*) · they become wicked among men

The evil-doing (*dushkritinah*), the deluded (*moorah*), the *naradhama*, the *asura*, come not to Me [VII 15]

They are overcome by *maya* it is *dustara* (difficult to cross) There is but one way to cross it,— the way of *sarana bhakti* The *saranagat bhakta* knows the Lord and surrenders all to the Lord! All he has,— wife, child, wealth, body, mind, fame, etc ,— he, the *bhakta*, brings as his *puja samagri* to the Lord, surrendering to Him all he has and all he is He claims nothing as his own

[4]

Four types of *bhaktas* (devotees) there be who come to the Lord And all the four are *sukritinah*, i.e. are persons of noble deeds (*uttama karma*) In birth after birth, through *janma* after *janma*, have they done noble deeds and so developed good *sanskaras* They have developed *vishvasa* in the Lord They have become *bhaktas* of the Lord

These types of *bhaktas* are —

(1) The *artharthi bhaktas*

They seek success in their undertakings Maybe, they want possessions, maybe, they want *sukha* in *swarga loka*, happiness in the heaven-world (*devachan*) after death But they do not stand as supplicants at the world's door They worship the Lord for success. They look up to Him to grant them success They have *shradha* in Him, faith in Him They will not ask the world for anything They seek Krishna for success in their undertakings

A classical illustration is Dhruva He is a prince His father is Uttanapada,— Manu's son But this king has married two wives, Suniti and Surichi Dhruva is born of Suniti. Uttama is born of Surichi When Dhruva is playing with his father, Surichi rebukes Dhruva, saying :— “Dhruva! nothing will avail thee! If thou wilt inherit the throne, go and pray to the Lord!”

Dhruva returns weeping to his mother, Suniti, and she tells him — “What Surichi tells you is true : go and pray to *Harī* (the Lord)”

Without waiting for another word, Dhruva makes straight for the forest, Madhuvana, near the Jamuna bank. On the way, he meets the Rishi Narada. This great *Rishi* gives Dhruva the *mantra* — “*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*”

Dhruva repeats this *mantra* in the dark forest, again and again. He repeats the *mantra*, casting out all fear of serpents and wild animals and all fear of solitude. And there comes to him a vision of the Lord, and in the vision comes to Dhruva, an assurance that he will get the kingdom (*artha*) he wants, and that he must return to his mother's house.

Dhruva returns. In the meantime, his father is out to a forest a-hunting and on the way meets Narada. Narada informs the king that Dhruva has had a vision of the Lord and is returning home. The king meets Dhruva on the way. He descends from his elephant to greet Dhruva, then lifts Dhruva on the elephant's back. The king brings Dhruva to the palace in procession, and the city rejoices that Dhruva has returned. Dhruva is nominated the king's successor to the throne.

(2) The *artah bhaktas*

They are the afflicted. They seek the Lord's protection in distress.

A classic illustration is Draupadī. She was the daughter of king Drupada. She was gifted with strange, mystic beauty and she recognised Sri Krishna as the Lord and was his devotee.

When Dushasana, under orders of Duryodhana, seizes her and tries to remove her *sari* and so make her naked in an open assembly, she lifts up her heart to Krishna. She cries to him in affliction — “Govinda! Keshava! O thou who can destroy all affliction, save me! O Mahayogi! I have taken refuge at thy feet. Come to my help! Guard me in this hour of my deep distress!”

And Krishna hears the *bhakta's* cry. Krishna leaves his seat and walks, bare-foot, to the assembly. Krishna shows *vastra-leela*. Dushasana removes one piece of cloth, but finds another covering Draupadī. He removes the second cloth, but finds a third is there already! So is veil after veil removed, but Draupadī is under protection. One cloth after another is removed in endless succession,— until Dushasana falls down tired, exhausted! Draupadī's honour is saved. Krishna becomes the

guardian of his *bhakta*

(3) The *jignasu bhaktas*

Who is a *jignasu*? A seeker after Light A *jignasu* has no craving for money or pleasure A *jignasu* is more than a scholar A *jignasu bhakta* is a Truth-seeker. He prays to the Lord for illumination He wants to know the *tatva* (essence) of life, the *tatva* of the *Paramatman*

In ancient India there were bands of *jignasus* they travelled, far and wide, in search of a *guru*, one who could speak to them of the *tatva*, the essence of the universe And they lived simple lives, pure lives and they prayed to the Lord for illumination

A classic illustration is Udhava. In a rich family was Udhava born And when he learnt that Krishna was soon to leave this world, Udhava said to Krishna — "Let me go, too Let thy servant depart!"

"Your time is not yet! You must stay here for sometime yet, to spread my message!"

And Udhava was so simple, so pure, so humble he bowed to the dust of the feet of the *gopis* In him was the humility of a *jignasu bhakta*

(4) The *gnani bhaktas*, the wise ones

What is *gnana*? *Gnana* is God-realisation The *gnani bhakta* sees the One Lord in all objects, in all creatures, in all countries, in all races, in all scriptures, in all prophets and saints He is absorbed in *eka-bhakti*, in devotion to the Lord He forgets the world he forgets his body he forgets desires he forgets his "ego" He is God-illuminated, God-absorbed!

A classic illustration is the boy,— Prahlada He is the son of the king of *daityas*, Hiranyakashipu

The king says — "I am the Lord . let all worship me! Let none worship Hari!"

But the boy, Prahlada, is a *Haribhakta* Prahlada says — "Father! Hari (the Lord) is Real and Him I worship!"

"Where is thy Hari. boy" asks the infuriated king

And Prahlada says — "Father! I see Hari before me, behind me, above me, around me! Hari is everywhere!"

The king orders that Prahlada be flung in the midst of serpents But they harm him not! He sees the Lord in them

The boy is, then, seized and thrown in front of an elephant. But the elephant refuses to trample upon Prahlada! He sees the Lord in the elephant

He is thrown down from the heights He touches the earth unharmed! He sees the Lord in every spot

He is flung into the sea The sea waves refuse to drown him! He sees the play of the Lord in the rise and fall of sea waves!

He is thrown into the flames They would not burn him In them, too, he beholds his shining Lord!

Prahlada is a *gnani bhakta* He has cast out all fear He sees the Lord in all!

To a *gnani bhakta*, then, the world is a vision of God He, the Lord, is, to the *gnani bhakta*, the essence (*latva*) of water the sapidity, *rasa* of water is God! What a sacred world! When you drink water, you drink in the Lord! And the *latva* of the sun and the moon is God He shineth in them! And He is the essence of the Vedas, the Om of the scriptures He is the *shabda* (Word) of ether The manhood of men is He And earth's pure fragrance is He the earth is holy! And He shineth in fire, and He is the Life of all that lives, and He is the *tapasya* of the *yogi*, and He is the *buddhi* of the wise And He is the strength of the strong, and He is the *tejas* (splendour) of all things that radiant be Vasudeva is all! The Lord is Life and Light and Love! *Ecce Deus!* Behold, the world is a vesture of the Lord!

[5]

Of the four classes of *bhaktas*,—(1) *artharthi bhaktas*, (2) *artah bhaktas*, (3) *jignasu bhaktas* and (4) *gnani bhaktas*,—Sri Krishna singles out the fourth as the best

I am beloved of the *gnani bhakta*, and he is beloved of Me
[VII 17]

(a) For the other three are swayed by desire and the attraction of objects but the *gnani bhakta* is possessed of spiritual knowledge, wisdom, *gnana*

Wisdom or *gnana* is emancipation from the immediate, the

particular In *gnana*, (1) you escape from sensation, (2) you rise above logic, above movement, mechanism, form, above intellection; and (3) you rise to recognition of the ultimate Essence and significance of the universe And in the presence of the Essence you sit in silence,— seeing nothing but God He is the Essence, *swarupa*, of all that is

(b) The *gnani* knows that all things are out of the three *gunas* of *apara prakriti*, and he knows that God is the Support (*param adhara*) of all *gunas* and things But the *gnani* knows, too, that God is above the three *gunas*. He transcends all things for things are finite, perishable, *anitya*, not *sthira*, and the Lord does not need them They are not in the Lord always the Lord is not in them always they vanish! But the Lord is established in His Glory! The Lord is immanent, yet transcendent He is in the perishable things but *nirlepa* (detached) Clouds do not dwell in ether always the clouds go, but ether still exists So things come and go they are passing But the Lord shineth for ever in His Glory!

Beloved of the Lord is the *gnani bhakta* but the Lord does not discard the other three classes of *bhaktas* “Noble are all these,” says Sri Krishna, “but the *gnani* is My *Swarupa* ” [VII 18] The *gnani bhakta* and the Lord are *Yukta atma*. God looks at him he looks at God! The twain abide together for ever

Such a *gnani*, the *tatva gnani*, is called *Mahatma* And a *Mahatma*, Sri Krishna says, is difficult to find A *Mahatma* is the product of a long evolution He is the ripe fruit of many births Doing *yagna*, *tapas*, *dana* and *satsang*, through a series of births, by a collective *karma* of concentration and service (*seva*), he purifies his *antah karan*, his inner consciousness And, one day, he becomes a *Mahatma*, *tatva gnani* He is not scattered His heart is not in multiplicity He is one in understanding and will with the Lord

Sri Krishna acknowledges the value of the other three types as well It is no sin to seek Krishna for (i) earthly objects, (ii) alleviation of suffering, and (iii) acquisition of knowledge These three classes, indeed, include many of those who give deep *bhakti* to the Lord

But in these three types “wisdom is rent away by desires

(*kama*)", and these persons go to the "gods"! It is true that to such people, too, it is the Lord who gives the faith (*shraddha*) with which they worship their "gods", and the Lord decrees the benefits derived from the worship of the "gods" But these benefits, rewards, or fruits are temporary For the worlds of the "gods", too, are perishable Even *Brahmaloka* passes into *pralaya* the very "gods" go! And they who enter the region of the "gods" are sure to return to re-birth

But *gnanis*, being devoted to the Lord, "come unto Me,"— says Krishna [VII. 19] Not many such and they come to Krishna! One recalls the saying of Jesus — "Strait is the gate and narrow the path, and few there be that find it "

[6]

Krishna is *avyakta* (Invisible to the material world) And those who are devoid of *buddhi* (intuition) know not Krishna, his supreme nature (*paramabhavam*), which is imperishable Krishna is of Eternal Being, but the world is deluded, and identifies Krishna with a visible, perishable form This delusion is due to the influence of *yoga maya* (creation illusion)

The world knoweth not Krishna . yet Krishna knoweth the beings that are past and present and to come Are they not all emanations of Him? Is He not the Invisible Life in all? But the world knoweth not Krishna as Deathless! The world is deluded by *dwandas* (pairs of opposites), deluded by the influence of attraction and repulsion (*ichcha dvesha*)

Those devoid of *buddhi* identify Me,— the Unmanifest,— with a visible form They know not My Supreme Nature which is imperishable

Enveloped by *yoga-maya*, this deluded world seeth not My Light

I know the beings that are past, that are present, and that are to come, O Arjuna! But the world knoweth Me not!

By the delusion of *dwandas*, due to attraction and repulsion, O Arjuna, the world walketh deluded!

[VII. 24-27]

Krishna-knowers are so few, so very few

They are men of pure deeds freed from sin.

They are released from the *duandas*, pairs of opposites

They take refuge in Me (*mamashritya*)

These blessed ones know

(1) *Brahman*, the Eternal,

(2) Self-knowledge, the Higher Self (*Adhyatman*),

(3) all action (*karma*)

They, also, know Krishna as the knowledge of the elements (*Adhibhuta*), as that of the Shining Ones (*Adhidaiva*), and as that of the sacrifice (*Adhiyagna*).

These blessed ones are the knowers, the *gnanis* They truly worship Krishna

CHAPTER 8

The Path Of Light

[1]

Chapter VII concludes with a reference to the knowers, the *gnanis*, the Krishna-knowers, the wise ones. They conquer death and get *gnana* (wisdom, knowledge).

They know — (1) *Brahman*,
(2) *Adhyatman*,
(3) *Karma*,
(4) *Adhyagna*,
(5) *Adhibhuta*;
(6) *Adhidaiva*,
and (7) *Abhyasa yoga*

These seven terms are explained in Chapter VIII of the Gita

(1) *Brahman*.

Brahman is *Parama Aksharam*

Parama is supreme · *aksharam* is indestructible. *Brahman* is *Aksharam* and *Paramam*, the Indestructible and the Supreme, the Undying Ultimate, the One Eternal God

Brahman is not a neutral "It" · *Brahman* is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, *Sachchidananda* · *Brahman* is *Paramatman*. *Brahman* transcends

the Veda and *prakṛiti* *Brahman* is beyond matter

(2) *Adhyatman*

Where may one meet *Brahman*? Meet Him within thee! In the Heart! He has entered within! The Self within, seated in the cavity of the heart, in the *jīva*, is called *Adhyatman*, the “Within-God”, the In-soul, the Soul of souls

Brahman is the Cosmic God, the “Father” the *Adhyatman* is the Within-God, the Indwelling Spirit

In the heart contrite and lowly, in the mind upright and holy, in the *jīvatman*, is His *svabhava*, a ray of His Light The *Adhyatman* is God’s *svarupa*, the God-in-Man, making man a Shekinah, a temple of the Lord! Ye are sons of God!

(3) *Karma*

How cometh He within? By “emanation”, a going forth from God! Emanation is *karma*,— an energy called *visarga* Emanation is, also, *tyaga* (renunciation), throwing out!

God renounces Himself! How? Through *sankalpa* — “I shall be many!”

This *adisankalpa* starts a *dhara*, a current, an *akhanda dhara* it becomes *karma-dhara*, *akhila karma-dhara* Out of God goeth forth what causes all life to live

This *karma* is the law of current, the law of causation and reincarnation. It regulates the successive lives of creatures on the earth (and in other planets), and their courses of action This *karma* is the Law — “As you sow, so shall you reap”

Karma is the energy of evolution *Karma* causes the birth of beings (*bhūtas*) and their evolution *Karma* makes for progress through suffering for progress is a gradual manifestation of the Higher Self So is man led on, step by step, to perfection And perfection is attained through suffering, through sacrifice, *yagna*

The secret of history is sacrificial lives And the Inspirer of them all is the Great Spirit of Sacrifice called *Adhiyagna* Lose life to gain life,— is the teaching of Christ and other Masters

(4) *Adhiyagna*

Adhiyagna is the Lord of Sacrifice. His Body is the Cosmic

Sacrifice and from His Sacrifice spring all creatures The Lord dwelleth in each body, in the *Sarva*, the All! He dwelleth therein as *Divya Purusha*, as the *Sanatan Avyakta*, the Eternal Unseen, the Divine Self, the Spirit of Sacrifice! And all the bodies are the shrines which flame unto Him

(5) *Adhībhuta*

Adhībhuta is the *adhīpati*,— the Lord,— of *bhutas*, elements, beings perishable objects *Ishavasyam idam sarvam* All that is, is a vesture of the Lord,— says the *Ishopanishad* Nature is sacred and the Universe becomes a veritable temple

(6) *Adhīdaiva*

Adhīdaiva is the *Adhīpati* — the presiding Power — of the Shining Ones, *Devas* He is the *Purusha* of the gods, the *Prathama Purusha* In the *Devas* shineth He He is the Lord of all the gods He is the *Hiranyagarbha Purusha*, the Golden *Purusha* He is the Divine Man, the *Prajapati*, the *Sutra-Atma*, the Great Breath of the Gods, the *Prana Purusha*! The gods are His *angas*, His limbs He is the Creative Energy,— the Divine Spirit,— of all the Shining Ones!

The Indestructible, the Supreme, is *Brahman* *Swabhava*, one's own self, the *jivatma*,— the *Atman* dwelling in the *jiva*,— the Indwelling One, is the *Adhyatman*

The *visarga* (discharge, throwing out), bringing forth beings into existence, is *karma* (energy, action)

All perishable things (*kshara*) are *Adhībhuta*.

The *Purusha* of the gods is *Adhīdaiva*

And Arjuna! in this body I Myself, as the Inner Witness, am *Adhīyagna*!

[VIII 3, 4]

[2]

Arjuna's first six questions having been thus answered, Sri Krishna enters upon an answer to Question 7 — What is the *yoga* which one may practise even in *antakala*,— the hour of death,— and attain the Supreme?

Arjuna! he who departeth from the body thinking of Me alone,— saith the Lord, he cometh forth to Me he enters into My being

For this is the law what a man looks for at the hour of his death, to that he goes The soul is fashioned to its like The thought of a man's last moment determines his destiny after death A man is transformed to that state (*bhava*) which he bears in mind when casting off his body He who, at the hour of death, is fixed in meditation on Krishna, on abandoning the body, the "shell", cometh to Krishna after death But there are other destinations for those who, while quitting the body, think not of Krishna but of other beings, other objects. As a man thinketh in the hour of death, so he becometh after death

Does he think of earthly objects,— of father, mother, brother, friend, wife, child, wealth, power, honour, gain? Then he cometh back to this Earth

Does he think of Heaven and heavenly happiness? Then he goeth to Heaven

Does he think only of the Supreme? Then to the Supreme he goeth after death

This, then, is the law . whatever be the *bhava*, state, object, being, a god, man, beast, bird, worm, tree, place, land, money, etc , whereof a man constantly thinks, doing its *abhyasa* in daily thoughts and daily life, that *bhava* dominates his consciousness in the hour of his departure And in that *bhava* is fashioned the picture of his life after death.

He who casting off the body, goeth forth, meditating upon Me alone at the hour of death, he attaineth to My State (*Madbhavam*) doubt that not!

Whosoever, O son of Kuntī! abandoneth the body, thinking upon any being (*bhavam*), to that being or object only he goeth, ever absorbed in its thought, ever to that conformed in nature

[VIII. 5, 6]

[3]

At the hour of death, a man goes to what he thinketh upon Such is the law Therefore, Arjuna,

(1) have Me in thy heart always!

(2) And thinking upon Me only, fight!

(1) "Have Me in thy heart always!"

For this life is uncertain . you never know when death may come! And if you leave this body in an hour of absorption not in the Lord but in things of the Earth, then, indeed, will your earth-life have been in vain But if, in the hour of death, your heart and mind are on Me fixed, then surely will you come to Me!

(2) And “thinking upon Me only, fight!”

To Arjuna is the teaching given — “Fight!” For Arjuna is a *kshatriya* . his *dharma*, *swadharma*, is to fight The teaching, then, really is — “And thinking upon Me only, do thy *dharma*, *swadharma*.” For by the doing of thy *swadharma*, thy *antah-karan*,— the inner consciousness,— will be purified

Think of the Lord and do thy duty Yes,— these two may well be linked together Does not the rope-dancer think of his feet and, also, of the pole he has to reach? Does not the motor-driver fix his thought on the steering-wheel and yet carry on conversation with his neighbour in the adjoining seat,— and even survey the road to guard the car against danger and collision?

Therefore, at all times, think of Me and fight! With mind (*manas*) and reason, will or heart (*buddhi*) set on Me (infused in Me), thou shalt surely come to Me [VIII. 7]

[4]

(a) The *yogi*'s way of attaining *Saguna Avyakta Divyarupa*,— *Adhiyagna Rupa*,— the *Parama Purusha*; reaching the *Divya Purusha*, *Saguna Parameshvaram*,— through *abhyasa yoga* in *anta-kala* (hour of death) :—

(1) The *yogi* controls the mind, *manas*

His mind wanders not . with never-wavering will, the *yogi* knows no other God.

(2) He meditates constantly on the *Parama Purusha Divyam*,— the *Purusha*, Supreme, Divine,— the Holiest, Perfect One! He is *Parama Purusha*, *Adhiyagna* On Him the *yogi* meditates and meditates,— until he passeth into His *Rupa* . he becomes God-absorbed

(b) The *yogi* meditates on the *Swarupa* of the Supreme *Purusha* . and the *yogi*'s face, in the hour of death, becomes a

mirror of God

Concerning this *Swarupa*, the following may be noted —

(i) He is *Kari*, All wise, *Sarvagna*, the All-knowing One, the Omniscient, the Lord of Sage and Singer

(ii) He is *Puratanam*, the Ancient of Days, the Eternal, Primeval, the *Adi* (Beginning) of all, the Ground of all, *Sanatan*

(iii) He is the *Swami*, the All-Ruler, *Sarva shaktivan*, the Ordainer of all things

(iv) He is subtler than the subtle, *Sukshamatama*, the smallest of the small (more subtle than atom)

(v) He is the Supporter, Sustainer of all, the Stay of all the world, the Upholder of all

(vi) He is of Form beyond comprehension, *achintyarupam*, of Form which passeth mortal knowing, beyond the comprehension of *manas* and *buddhi*

(vii) Yet is He refulgent as the Sun, bright as the Sun of suns, ever-shining, glowing brighter than the sun's burning gold, *Shuddha Sachchidananda*

(viii) Beyond the darkness is He, past all gloom, dispersing all darkness, the darkness of *avidya* or ignorance

(c) The *yogi*, with mind set fast and fixed in devotion (in truth and faith), draws his life-breath between calm brows. Such a *yogi* dies in happy peace, and in peace he passeth to the *Purusha* Divine. Such a *yogi* comes not into the wheel of birth and death,— except at his will

He whose mind wavers not, but continuously meditates, he, O Partha! goeth to the *Param Purusham Divyam*, the Supreme Divine *Purusha*

He meditates on Him as — (1) the Omniscient, (2) the Ancient, (3) the All-Ruler, (4) the Minuter than the minute, (5) the Supporter of all, (6) of Form beyond the understanding of mortals, (7) yet refulgent as the Sun, and (8) beyond all darkness

Such a *yogi*, having steadfast mind and devotion, (*anuraga*), holds his life-breath in the centre, the space between the two eye-brows, and so in the time of forth-going attains the Supreme Divine *Purusha*

[VIII 8-10]

Reaching the *Aksharam Param, Nirguna Parabrahma* —

The Veda-knowers (*Vedavitt*) speak of *Aksharam*, Ultimate, the Indestructible Into This enter the saints and ascetics, the passion-free they tread a similar path and attain *Nirguna-Brahman*

They shut the gates of all the senses (five *gnana-indryas* and five *karma-indryas*),— the media of perception They draw the senses inward They do *pratyahara*

They lock the mind,— desire,— in the heart, the heart's cave, *hridaya kamala* (between *nabhi* and *kantha*)

They centre the life-breath, vital airs, in the head they do *dharana*

They remain steadfast in *yogic* concentration

And they recite (mentally) the one-syllabled emblem of *Brahman*,— Om

They think upon Me in My absolute aspect (*Krishna as Brahman*)

They, too, abandoning the body, go on the Highest Path (*Paramangatim*), the Supreme State (*Nirvana Brahman*)

That which is declared *Aksharam* (Indestructible) by the Veda-knowers, that which the controlled and passion-free enter, that which the *brahmacharins* strive after and practice *brahmacharya* for,— that Path I will declare to thee, in brief

All the gates of the body (sense-organs) closed, the mind fixed in the heart, the life breath fixed in the head, remaining steadfast in *yogic* concentration, reciting the one-syllabled “Om”,— the *Brahman* Eternal,— dwelling on Me (in My absolute aspect, that of *Brahman*), he who goeth forth abandoning the body, he goeth on the Highest Path (and attains the Supreme)

[VIII 11-13]

(1) Is the *yoga* of *Saguna Parameshvaram* — the Supreme *Purusha* Divine,— difficult?

Is the *yoga* of *Nirguna Paramatman*,— the *Paramam Gatim*,

Brahma Nirvana,— still more difficult?

Then know the “easy path” (*sulabhhah*). Think of Me with undivided mind, none other gods regarding. Look ever to Me in faith and love Be always absorbed in Me!

(2) He who cometh to Me,— attaineth Me,— he becomes a *Mahatma*, a Great Soul, a Perfect Man And attaining Me, he falls not back to birth He cometh not to this life which is the place of pain (*dukkha alayam*), which ends, being non-eternal (*ashashvatam*) He who attaineth Me takes the Imperishable Way, the way of Blessedness, the Perfect Way (*Param Sidhu*)

(3) For all the worlds, Arjuna! even Brahma’s* world, come and go They roll back from death to life and life to death And this life is unrest for it is a wheel of birth and death But he, O Kunti’s son, who reacheth Me, he knoweth birth no more. For beyond Time am I But all the worlds are subject to time and so abide not They are born they die they are born again and back to death they roll Even heaven,— *Brahma-loka*,— is transient The very angels and gods are mortal The worlds will, one day, cease to be But I, O Prince of India, abide for ever (*Kala-ateeta*)

Arjuna! he who constantly thinketh upon Me with a mind that regardeth none else,— he, the *yogi nitya-yukta* (ever-harmonised, always absorbed in Me),— he easily attaineth Me

Such perfect men,— great souls, *mahatmas*,— having come to Me, come not again to birth, the place of pain, non-eternal they have gone to the highest Bliss, the highest Perfection

Arjuna! all the worlds, beginning with the *Brahma-loka*,— they appear and disappear they come and go But he who cometh unto Me, O son of Kunti, he knoweth birth no more

[VIII 14-16]

[7]

(1) Arjuna! all the worlds, including the world of the gods, come and go, from death to life and life to death, again and again For all these spheres are ruled by a cyclic law It is the law of coming and going, the law of alternate phases The one phase is named “Brahma’s Day” the other is named “Brahma’s Night”

* Brahma is a god,— the first of the Hindu Trinity Brahman is the Eternal

(2) "Brahma's Day" is a thousand *yugas* (ages),— of evolution (*prakash*), manifestation (*vyakta*). Brahma's Night is a thousand *yugas* (ages),— of involution (*pralaya*). To know (from realisation) "Brahma's Day", which is a thousand *yugas*, "Brahma's Night", which is a thousand *yugas*, is, indeed, to know "Day" and "Night", as God doth know

When the deep "Night" of Brahma doth darken, all the worlds go into *pralaya*, falling back again into the *avyakta* (unmanifested state),— the *sukshama prakriti*, *apara prakriti*, the *sukshama sarira* of Brahma,— whence they came. And when the Dawn of Brahma doth break, out of the *avyakta* (the Invisible) are brought anew the worlds into the visible of *prakriti* and the vast company of living beings and non-living things ariseth to life, and evolution is astir! Again and yet again, are the worlds and beings, (including gods) produced, brought into "manifestation", and again and still again, are they "dissolved" at the coming of the "Night" of Brahma!

In Brahma's Day, Brahma awakes from his *sushupti*-state then appears the *vyakta* out of the *avyakta*. In Brahma's Night, Brahma goes from the state of awakening into the *sushupti* then the *vyakta* goes into the *avyakta*. It is the state of *pralaya*. All creatures, separated from their *sthula sariras*, go into the *sukshama* state of *prakriti*. *Avyakta* = *sukshama*, *prakriti* = *apara prakriti*. Embodied beings go into *pralaya* and enter into evolution (*prakash*) for they are under the hold of *prakriti*.

The embodied beings are *vyaktis* they come into birth, again and again. When the "Night" is over and the "Day" dawns, they wear the "forms" or "bodies" according to their *gunas* and *karmas* and appear in the stream of evolution. They appear, again and again. There is, thus, no new creation they enter into the *chakra* of evolution and they pass into *pralaya*, the *sukshama prakriti*, again and again.

There is no end to this process of re-birth and re-absorption, until there is the attainment of the Eternal God (*Parmeshwara* or *Parmatman*). They enter into this time-process, again and again, for they are subject to the influence of *prakriti*. Helpless are they, being held by *maya*,— each according to the *gunas* and *karma* of his *swabhava* or *prakriti*. They enjoy and suffer

according to the *gunas* born of *prakṛiti*. In this process are they for ages on account of *sanga* of *prakṛiti* (association with matter)

They who know (from realisation) that one Day of Brahma is equal to a thousand *yugas*, *mahayugas* (ages) [one *mahayuga* = 4 *yugas*, viz. *Satya* (*kṛita*), *Treta*, *Dvāpara*, and *Kali*] and that one Night of Brahma is equal to another thousand *yugas*, *mahayugas*,— they alone know Day and Night. To them is known the truth about time.

From the Unmanifested (*avyakta*, Brahma's subtle body), all the manifested stream forth at the coming of Brahma's Day. And at the coming of his Night, they dissolve, merge, even in that called the Unmanifested (the same *sukshama sarīra* of Brahma).

Arjuna! This multitude of beings goeth forth repeatedly, is born again and again, and is dissolved, too, at the coming of Brahma's Night. This is due to ordination, the compulsion of *prakṛiti*. And again this multitude of beings streams forth, taking shape at dawn of Day. [VIII 17-19]

[8]

(1) But above this *avyakta* (unmanifested) of *prakṛiti* (nature), above the *sukshama sarīra* of Brahma, another, higher, unmanifest *avyakta* abides,— the Invisible of the Eternal Spirit, the Ultimate,— the Deeper Life Invisible, Eternal (*sanātana*)

This Life,— the Deeper Life Invisible,— endures when all beings and all things are destroyed, plunged in *pralaya*,— the fated time of cosmic doom! This Life named the Unmanifest (*avyakta*), the Infinite, the Uttermost, is the Final Goal.

This Eternal Unmanifest is the supremely Divine Substance that perisheth never! This Divine Substance is the *Parama Divya Puruṣa*, the Supreme Shining Spirit, the *Adhīyagna*. The same is called *Kavi* (Omniscient), *Purāṇa* (the Ancient), the *Parama Puruṣa*, the *Avyakta Murti*.

The first *avyakta* (of *prakṛiti*), the *sukshama sarīra* of Brahma is matter (*jada*), is destructible. The second *avyakta* is Consciousness (*Chetana*), Indestructible, All-seer and All-knower! The second *avyakta* is the Eternal Lord of all. Even at the time of cosmic *pralaya*, when all things and beings go into the

sukshama sarira of Brahma (*mulaprakṛiti*), even then the second *avyakta*, the *Dīvyā Puruṣha*, the Divine Spirit liveth, established in His Glory!

(2) That Life,— the Deeper Life Invisible,— the *avyakta* of the Divine Spirit,— is Mine and that Supreme Abode (*akshara*, *avyakta*) is Mine It is My Eternal Home, *Parama Dhama*, *Nitya Dhama*, *Parama Gati*

(3) And they who arrive thither,— Krishna's abode,— they return not to this abode of birth and death

(4) And they arrive by *ananya-bhakti*, by love and faith which wander not By devotion they come to Me in whom dwell all beings (*antargata sthiti*), and who pervading all hath spread the Universe in space! By devotion, they come to Me, and enter into Perfect Peace

Verily, there exist a Higher (Life) than this *avyakta*,— another Unmanifest,— the Eternal Divine that, in the destroying of all beings, is not destroyed

That *avyakta aksharah* is the Highest Path, the Supreme Goal! They who reach it, return not It is My supreme abode

He, the Highest *Puruṣha* (Spirit), O Partha! may be reached by unswerving devotion to Him alone in whom all beings reside and by whom all this,— the universe,— is pervaded

[VIII 20-22]

[9]

Blessed is he! He goeth on the Path leading to the Abode of *Brahman* It is the Path of Light, the Path of Liberation And reaching the Abode of Krishna, none returneth The very gods attend him on the Path and lead him to *Brahman*

(i) There is the God *Agni* named "*Archī*" in the Upanishads,— the god "*Agni Jyoti*", the all-effulgent "*Fire-God*"

(ii) There is the god presiding over day-time (*ahah*)

(iii) There is the god presiding over the "six months of the northern part of the sun" (*śhanamāsa uttarayanam*)

Beyond this is the *Parama dhama* of the Lord In this *dhama*, he beholds the *Saguna Parmatma sakṣaṅkar*, and is absorbed in the *swarupa* of *Bhagwan* This *dhama*, abode, is also named *nitya*

dhama, satya loka, parama dhama, saketa loka, go loka, vaikuntha loka, and Brahman loka This "*Brahman loka*" is not the "*punarvartī Brahma loka*", of the earlier *sloka*, from which the *jīva* returneth to the cycle of births and deaths

[10]

(1) As distinguished from this Path of Light and Liberation is another Path, of Bondage and Return to re-birth. The first path is the Path of Light and Liberation (*śhukla*), the second is the path of Bondage and Return (*krishna*). The first is *devayana*, the second is *pitṛiyana*. In this path are located the gods presiding over (i) smoke, (ii) night, (iii) the dark fortnight (*krishna-paksha*), and (iv) the six months of the southward course of the sun (*śhanamasa dakṣhinayana*).

In this path travel the *sakamī* (acting with a desire for fruit), and they, led by the gods in succession and crossing the *pitṛiloka*, attain the *chandra loka*,— and get *divya deva sarira*, the lustre of the moon (*chandra*), and enter into Heaven. There they enjoy the fruits of their *śhubha karmas* and then return to this mortal world. In the same path travel the *yogabhrashta*.

(2) Knowing thus these two paths, O Partha, the *yogī* is nowise perplexed. the *yogī* is not deluded by *moha*. So be thou, Arjuna! Be *yoga-yukta*, established in *yoga*,— and so rise above *moha*! The *yogī* knowing this, the secret of the Paths,— attains wisdom, and so thinks not of the fruits of good deeds,— as mentioned in the Vedas, viz (i) sacrifices or prayers, *yagnas*, (ii) austerity or *tapah*, and (iii) gifts or *dana*.

Richer, indeed, is wisdom than the study of the Vedas. and greater is wisdom than gifts. and better is wisdom than prayer or fast. The *yogī* knoweth wisdom and attains the Supreme eternal state,— the Perfect Primeval Abode,— the Shinning Eternal *Purusha*.

Two paths there be. In the one are located the all-effulgent fire-god, the god presiding over day-time, the god of the bright fortnight, and the god of the six months of the northern part of the sun. Led by these gods, the *yogīs* who know the Eternal go to the Eternal.

In the other path are located the god presiding over smoke,

the god of night time, the god of the dark fortnight and the god of the six months of the southern path of the sun

Led by these gods, the *yogi* goes to *pitrī loka*, then to the world of the moon, and there attaining the lustre of the moon, he goes to Heaven and from Heaven he returneth to this world of birth and pain

Light and Darkness,— these are the world's everlasting paths By the one, a man goeth who returneth not by the other goeth he who returneth again!

These two Paths, the *yogi* knows and so is never perplexed Therefore, O Partha' be firm in *yoga*,— always

The *yogi* thinks not of fruits of actions,— of *yagna*, *tapas* and *dana*, and so goeth to the supreme eternal state of Peace and Blessedness

[VIII. 24-28]

CHAPTER 9

The Supreme Mystery

[1]

Goethe, the great German poet, speaks of the "Eternal Secret that floats around us" In chapter IX of the Gita, Sri Krishna speaks unto his beloved disciple, Arjuna of the "Eternal Secret" (*Raja Guhya*)

Krishna says unto Arjuna — "Now I shall tell thee the most secret truth" This "secret truth" is regarding Krishna's Transcendental Being (the divine Mystery of the Lord) and Love divine And the Lord reveals the "secret truth" unto Arjuna, for Arjuna has answered the test Arjuna has been uncarping, free from malice Arjuna is not one of those who take delight in the defects of others

To thee, the uncarping, shall I now declare this profoundest Secret, *gnana* with *vignana* combined Knowing this, thou shalt be freed from evil [IX 1]

The Wisdom of the Gita, we read in Chapter XVIII, is not to be revealed to a carping critic Such a man is a quibbler, a word-juggler, a debator of terms, a dealer in shadows, a sophist Not unto him may Truth be told

Arjuna has been a true disciple. He has questioned, but in his questioning is aspiration. He has been a seeker, not a quibbler. His heart rejects not. To Arjuna, therefore, does the Master reveal the esoteric knowledge of *bhakti*, knowing which a man is freed, for ever, from the evils of the "three qualities", which are an impediment to pure devotion.

What is this esoteric knowledge? This "profoundest Secret," Sri Krishna says, is "*gnana* with *vignana* combined." What is *gnana*? And what is *vignana*? What is the difference between the two?

Gnana is knowledge of *Nirguna* Brahman or the Absolute. Knowledge or worship of *Nirguna* Brahman is possible to a few. In recent years, appeared Rishi Dayanand,— God's gift to this broken nation. And Rishi Dayanand spoke of worship of *Nirguna* Brahman. Rishi Dayanand was a *bal-brahmachari*, a seer of singular purity and singular aspiration. How many Dayanands have appeared in a century! To the majority of us, the Absolute, the *Parmatman*, is an "unknown God." The *Nirguna* Brahman—who knoweth? The Absolute Reality—who can comprehend? "Who dare name His Name?" asks Goethe. Rightly doth a *Rishi* say in an Upanishad that "our words and our minds attain Him not—they return failing to know him." The *Nirguna* Brahman is *Avyakta*, the Unmanifest.

The majority of us cry for a "manifest God", for *Sakara* Brahman. *Vignana* is knowledge or worship of *Sakara* Brahman. The great sage, Dattatreya, says that *Nirguna* worship is for him who is an *asarira*, and he defines an *asarira* as "one who transcends *dandas* (pairs of opposites), transcends his body and senses, his mind and *buddhi*, and is so unaffected by pleasure or pain that, even if placed on the funeral pyre, he feels no pain!" The majority of us fail to rise to such heights. What appeals to us is *Sakara* Brahman, i.e. "God made manifest." Electricity, though omnipresent, is invisible to us. But we behold it in a bulb—there we see electricity as a shining light. The Great Ones of humanity are the "bulbs" of Brahman. They are, in the words of a Sufi singer, "lanterns where God's light shines through." I confess I worship at the shrine of the Great Ones. They make history,—not, as Marx would have us believe, prices and wages.

and votes and assemblies

Krishna says that He is the central Light of the world's great men and heroes. He is the *Purusha Uttama*, the Supreme Person of all history. In Him the *Nirguna* Brahman is made manifest, the Great Reality is revealed. He is the Supreme Revelation.

Gnana, then, is truth or knowledge of the Absolute. *Gnana* is worship of or meditation on the *avyakta*, the Unmanifest. This is difficult for most of us. *Vignana* is knowledge of or meditation on *vyakta*, the *Sakara* Brahman. Here you meditate on Him not as Absolute but on one of His forms.

These forms are —

(1) *Vishvarupa*, cosmic forms, Nature. You may meditate on the sun or river, on mountain or flower or bird or cow or any of the cosmic forms.

(2) Humanity. Here you meditate on a hero, a *bhakta*, a teacher or saint. "All worship is by symbols," said Carlyle. And symbolatry is not idolatry.

Or you worship Him in the poor and lowly. They are His *rupas*. St. Francis beheld his Master in the leper. Saints have seen the poor as "veils" of the Lord. And "beneath the veils He hides," said the Sufi poet, Jami.

(3) *Avataras*. In Them you talk to Him, you walk with Him.

And Krishna reveals the Secret of Himself to Arjuna, saying — "I am He." Krishna claims to be *Purushottama*, the Divine Man.

And meditating on the Krishna-Avatar, you may think of the Lord as Father (did not Krishna guard Draupadi?) or as Mother (how tenderly Krishna loved the *gopis*!) or as Friend (how Krishna wept for His friend, Sudama!) or as Spouse of the soul or as Child (how Krishna played with the *gopis*!).

[2]

What is God? Only God knows. We know as He reveals. He puts away the veil, *maya*. He does it as an act of grace, *kripa*. In grace the Lord speaks to Arjuna further of the Mystery and the Wisdom which but to know setteth free from all ills.

"Who am I?" asks Krishna. And He says — I pervade the universe. Krishna pervades the world, not in embodied form,

but in His unmanifest aspect, as Brahman All beings are rooted in Me, dwell in Me, says Krishna, but I am not rooted in them For I transcend the universe I transcend both *pralaya* (dissolution) and *prakash* (manifestation or evolution) I have spun the web of life : and all dwell in Me. I am their support but they support Me not They depend on Me I do not depend on them I create and sustain them, yet am I beyond creation This is the divine mystery (*yogam aishvaram*) The Lord creates all and sustains all, yet dwells outside of all

By Me the whole universe is pervaded in My unmanifest aspect. All beings have root in Me, but I am not rooted in them

And (yet) the beings have no root in Me Behold My divine mystery My Self creates all, sustaineth all, yet is not rooted in them [IX 4, 5]

God, the Eternal, is, also, the universal *Atman* pervading the whole universe So all things and all objects, the gods and men, the sun and stars, the animals and plants, the minerals, atoms, electrons, all are a part of the divine Life All are come out of God, His thought, *sankalpa*, the divine Idea, God's *yoga-maya*, His divine *shakti* So all creatures and all things dwell in God The universe, then, has a value It is rooted in God

As the winds move in space but are not space, so all beings are in Krishna but are not Krishna As things move in a dream but do not bind or chain the man who dreams, so all beings, creatures and things, move in Krishna, in Krishna's Idea, but do not bind or enchain Krishna

As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, ever dwells in the etheric space (*akasha*), even so, know thou, that all beings rest in Me [IX 6]

The beings are of *maya*, of *prakriti* Out of *prakriti* they come in a period of manifestation (evolution), and into *prakriti* they go at the end of each *kalpa*, world-age. And at the beginning of a new world-age, they come forth out of *prakriti* into form again.

The *prakriti*, over which Krishna presides, brings forth the world, from time to time, and again dissolves it into the unmanifest This evolution and involution of forms is Krishna's *maya* and has not power to bind Him This work of *prakriti*

proceeds by laws of nature This work of producing "multitude of beings" does not bind Krishna He observes all as one detached from these works Unattached to actions is Krishna, for He seeks no reward

At the close of a *kalpa* (world-age), O Arjuna, all beings return into My nature (*prakṛiti*) And at the beginning of the (next) *kalpa*, I send them forth

Through My nature, I send forth, again and again all this multitude of beings which are helpless, being under the control of nature (*prakṛiti*) [IX. 7, 8]

Thus, Krishna, as Supervisor, Governor, holds the control of nature (*prakṛiti*), pervading all creatures Yet, Krishna Himself is not identical with His creatures In His own eternal divine Glory Krishna sitteth, unattached, the Support of all, yet fixed in naught, producing the animate and inanimate universe, the primal Fount of all Thus the worlds go on And I am free, says Krishna, unattached, unchained, though by help of *prakṛiti*, I send forth the realm of visible things

These actions, O Arjuna, enchain Me not For I sit apart from them unattached in those actions

Thus, supervised by Me, doth nature send forth all things, moving and unmoving, and so, O Arjuna, the world revolves [IX 9, 10]

God is One and the One is manifested as the many The One is the Eternal, the Imperishable, the Absolute Brahman, that never goes into *pralaya* (dissolution) The gods,— Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and others,— the men, the animals, the plants, the minerals, all beings, all the worlds and planets, all the suns and stars, go into *pralaya* The whole drama of matter, life and consciousness, the drama of evolution goes into disappearance But the Eternal abides And the *Purushottama*, the Incarnate Lord, Śrī Krishna,— He abides and goeth not into dissolution

[3]

The Eternal Secret is that God is one The One is *avyakta* (unmanifest) And the *avyakta*, by *yoga-maya*, is made manifest as the Incarnate Lord, the *Purushottama*, the *Parama Purusha*, the Man Supreme And this is Śrī Krishna But the deluded,

seeing Him clad in human body, know not that He is the Lord of Life and of its plan

Alas! many are deluded they are the foolish ones (*mudha*) They see Krishna clad in ordinary human form, and they fail to recognise Him, His higher Being (*param bhavam*), His supreme Form as the sovereign Lord of all (*bhuta maheshvaram*)

(Seeing Me) clad in human form, the foolish take no heed of Me, not knowing My higher nature (that rules) as the sovereign Lord of all beings [IX 11]

There is *mohini prakriti*, deceitful nature and there is *daivi prakriti*, divine nature They who partake of the first, walk the way of desires, the way of sin and stain, the brutal way which fiends and demons take But the *mahatmas*, the great souls, who partake of Krishna's divine nature, worship the Lord with unwavering mind and know Him as being one with the Supreme,— the Imperishable Source of all beings

But the great souls (*mahatmas*), O Arjuna, partaking of My divine nature, worship Me with a mind that wanders not They know that I am the Imperishable source of all beings [IX 13]

In the worship the *mahatmas* offer to Krishna, knowledge (*gnana*) predominates They give unto Krishna *gnana yagna*, the sacrifice of wisdom

And they fix their minds on the mystery of Krishna as One and, again, on His mystery as manifold — the One Divine Face on all sides

The *mahatmas* know Krishna as the Source of life, as one with all beings and, at the same time, free from contact with any Krishna's aspects are innumerable Unto Krishna, the *mahatmas* bring the offering of truth (*gnana*) and they, also, worship Krishna as diverse-faced

They magnify Me always , strenuous and steadfast in their vows, they do homage to Me , ever self-controlled, they worship Me with reverent love

Others, also, sacrificing with the sacrifice of wisdom, worship Me, as the one, as the distinct, and as the many (because they see Me) everywhere present [IX 14, 15]

transitory heavenly happiness, and then descend to this mortal world and enter into the cycle of birth and death

All offerings really come to Krishna for He is the Lord of all sacrifices But the worshippers of the gods do not know Krishna, as He is so they climb but fall They return to the world of men

For I am the Enjoyer and Lord of every sacrifice But these men do not know Me in My true nature, and so they fall (into the wheel of birth and death again) [IX 24]

The worshippers of (1) the *devas* (gods), and (2) the *pitris* (ancestors), and (3) the *bhutas* (elements, ghosts) meet with the reward they seek They go to their respective spheres But Krishna's worshipper and lovers come unto Krishna they enter the Eternal Abode

Who worship the gods go to the gods, who worship manes go to the manes, who worship the lower spirits (*bhutas*) go to the lower spirits, but My worshippers come unto Me [IX 25]

[6]

The lowliest may approach Krishna The simplest offering is acceptable, provided it is made with love and earnestness

The little way is the Gita's way to perfect life *Patram*, *pushpam*, *phalam*, *toyam*, a leaf, a flower, a fruit, a little water,—no matter how poor or simple the thing, it is acceptable to Krishna, provided it comes from an earnest soul with a sincere longing The Lord asks not for great things Little things are you asked to give Him In little things, remember Him each day,—in little moments, in trifles These reflect Eternity

He who offereth to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that gift of love I accept (as offering) of the pure of heart [IX 26]

If you give the little ones, the broken ones, the thirsty ones, the neglected ones, the world's disinherited ones, the poor ones in broken cottages, little cups of cold water,—kind words, little gifts of love,—the Lord blesseth you Sow little seeds of love and you will reap a rich destiny Kindle a little candle each day and your life will shine Be a little stone in the temple of service Offer little grains of love to hungry hearts Chant to the Lord

little hymns, as chants the little bird his song of praise Be a little one of the Lord!

Be dedicated to the service of God Consecrate to Him all your acts Let all the common tasks of daily life be thy worship to God let them be an expression of your love for God

The way of works, of activities,— *karma marga*,— starts with duty and ends on a note of adoration of the Eternal, of worship of the Lord Dedicated work is worship

Remember this, O Arjuna, eating or sacrificing, giving gifts, praying or fasting,— let it all be done for Me as Mine!

Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerities thou dost practise,— let it all be done, O Arjuna, as an offering unto Me

[IX 27]

Not your words but your deeds,— dedicated to Him,— are acceptable to the Lord

Words are easy It is the doing that is difficult and the doing is essential Do everything as dedicated to Him Clever talking will not take you a single step forward So the *Rishi* says in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* — Let the Brahman, who is wise, discerning Him, the Self, practise wisdom,— show forth the beauty of wisdom in action

So in the last *adhyaya* (18th), Krishna says to Arjuna — “Reflect well on what hath been told thee, then act,— as it seemeth best to thee ”

Do every thing not to please men but to be blessed by the Lord “Take heed,” says Jesus, “that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them ” The secret of the true life, the holy life, is known to him who acts not for the purpose of gain or fame, but to reflect the life divine

To walk this way is to be like a little child who thinks only of his mother Think only of thy Mother Divine So the teaching is given in the holy books of Tibet — “Be not distracted!” And the *Rishi* of the *Upanishad* says — “Let a Brahmin turn away from learning and aspire to live as a child!”

[7]

God condemns none and He favours none The same is He to

Krishna proceeds to describe Himself Krishna is the cosmic sacrifice He is in every form, every part, every act of sacrifice (*yagna*)

And they, who worship the Veda and the gods, unconsciously worship Krishna and sacrifice to Krishna

I am the worship, I am the sacrifice, I am the oblation to the *manas* I am the healing herb, I am the *mantra*, I am the ghee, I am the fire, and I am the burnt-offering [IX. 16]

Krishna is the pure object of knowledge, the word of Power (Om) in the Vedas Krishna is the essence of Vedic wisdom, the end of learning

I am the father of this world, the mother, the supporter and the grandsire I am the holy one to be known I am Om, and also the Rig, the Sama and the Yajur (Vedas) [IX. 17]

Krishna is the Way and the Goal of the world He is the Path He is the Master He is the Sustainer, He is the Witness He watches every action He is the Abode, the Refuge, He is the Friend, the Lover. He is the Home He is the Origin, the Fountain and the Sea of life He is the Dissolution or End. He is the Base or Foundation He is the Treasure of worlds And He is the Imperishable Seed, the Seed of life that never dies

(I am) the way, the supporter, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend (I am) the origin and the dissolution, the foundation, the treasure-house, and the deathless seed [IX. 18]

Krishna controls the elements He is *sat*, i e Being, the Unmanifested Cause He is, also, *asat*, i e all that is not, the passing Krishna, then, is the Causation of all phenomena, and Krishna is the Effect.

I give heat I withhold and send forth the rain I am immortality and also death I am what seems (*asat*) and what eternal is (*sat*) [IX. 19]

They who worship according to Vedic rites and drink the soma juice (the sacred sacrament), they pray,— unconsciously,— to

Krishna for heaven And Krishna grants their petition And they attain the celestial realm of Indra They feast upon heavenly food (*devabhogan*) of gods.

Fulfilling the Vedic ritual, they go to heaven, but they stay there for a period they return to the world of mortal men, when their merit is spent They obtain the transitory Having enjoyed the glorious realm of the gods, for a period, they sink back into this mortal world,— the world of death,— as soon as their stock of merit is exhausted They do not escape the wheel of birth and death These heavenly enjoyments, too, come and go

The knowers of the three Vedas, who drink the soma juice and are purified from sin, worshipping Me with sacrifice, pray for the way to *svarga* (the heaven-world) Having reached the holy world of Indra (the lord of heaven), they enjoy in heaven the divine pleasures of the gods

Having enjoyed the vast world of heaven, when their merit is exhausted, they come back to this world of death Thus following the words of the three Vedas and desirous of enjoyments, they obtain the passing (what is subject to birth and death) [IX 20, 21]

Only to His *bhaktas* does Krishna grant the power to win and hold that knowledge which shall lead them to His own Being To them who worship Krishna alone, Krishna brings full security He guards their welfare He gives them the full assurance of blessedness He gives them eternal happiness

But those who worship Me and meditate on Me alone, to them who are self-controlled, I give what they have not and hold secure whatever they have [IX 22]

The hearts which worship other gods in simple faith, they also worship Krishna Their prayers rise to the Lord, though they are not aware of Him

The Gita keeps clear of credalism and sectarianism

Even the devotees of other gods who, in faith, worship them (the gods),— they also worship Me, O Arjuna, though not in the right way [IX 23]

They who worship other gods worship Krishna in ignorance and, on this account, not truly understanding Him, they enjoy a

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Who worship the gods go to the gods, who worship manes go to the manes, who worship the lower spirits (*bhutas*) go to the lower spirits, but My worshippers come unto Me [IX 25]

[6]

The lowliest may approach Krishna The simplest offering is acceptable, provided it is made with love and earnestness

The little way is the Gita's way to perfect life *Patram*, *pushpam*, *phalam*, *toyam*, a leaf, a flower, a fruit, a little water,—no matter how poor or simple the thing, it is acceptable to Krishna, provided it comes from an earnest soul with a sincere longing The Lord asks not for great things Little things are you asked to give Him In little things, remember Him each day,—in little moments, in trifles These reflect Eternity

He who offereth to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that gift of love I accept (as offering) of the pure of heart [IX 26]

If you give the little ones, the broken ones, the thirsty ones, the neglected ones, the world's disinherited ones, the poor ones in broken cottages, little cups of cold water,—kind words, little gifts of love,—the Lord blesseth you Sow little seeds of love and you will reap a rich destiny Kindle a little candle each day and your life will shine Be a little stone in the temple of service Offer little grains of love to hungry hearts Chant to the Lord

little hymns, as chants the little bird his song of praise Be a little one of the Lord¹

Be dedicated to the service of God Consecrate to Him all your acts Let all the common tasks of daily life be thy worship to God let them be an expression of your love for God

The way of works, of activities,— *karma marga*,— starts with duty and ends on a note of adoration of the Eternal, of worship of the Lord Dedicated work is worship

Remember this, O Arjuna, eating or sacrificing, giving gifts, praying or fasting,— let it all be done for Me as Mine¹

Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerities thou dost practise,— let it all be done, O Arjuna, as an offering unto Me [IX 27]

Not your words but your deeds,— dedicated to Him,— are acceptable to the Lord

Words are easy It is the doing that is difficult and the doing is essential Do everything as dedicated to Him Clever talking will not take you a single step forward So the *Rishi* says in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* — Let the Brahman, who is wise, discerning Him, the Self, *practise* wisdom,— show forth the beauty of wisdom in action

So in the last *adhyaya* (18th), Krishna says to Arjuna — “Reflect well on what hath been told thee, then act,— as it seemeth best to thee ”

Do everything not to please men but to be blessed by the Lord “Take heed,” says Jesus, “that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them ” The secret of the true life, the holy life, is known to him who acts not for the purpose of gain or fame, but to reflect the life divine

To walk this way is to be like a little child who thinks only of his mother Think only of thy Mother Divine So the teaching is given in the holy books of Tibet — “Be not distracted!” And the *Rishi* of the *Upanishad* says — “Let a Brahmin turn away from learning and aspire to live as a child!”

[7]

God condemns none and He favours none The same is He to

all that live But those who worship Him with faith and love,— they come to Him They who give their love to Him win His love

I am the same to all beings To Me there is none hateful nor dear But those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me, and I also (am) in them [IX 29]

In Krishna there is no partiality He knows not hatred nor favour Fire does not choose on whom to shed its warmth He who draws near to fire is warmed, others will be cold The sun's light is reflected in a clean mirror, but not in a dirty one So Krishna's warmth is felt by His *bhakta* Krishna's light is reflected by His devotee

In sin, too, is the Sinless One the Lord pursues us And when the sinner turns to god with single heart, and resolves to sin no more, he grows in spiritual strength and vision He, too, becomes holy

Even if a man, deep-sunk in sin, worships Me with single heart, he, too, must be reckoned as righteous, for he hath rightly resolved

And he shall soon become righteous and reach ever-lasting peace O Arjuna, know thou for certain that My devotee perisheth never [IX 30, 31]

He who loveth the Lord is never lost A man may be a sinner but if he has devotion, he becomes a saint, for his heart is right Internal revolution leads the sinner to righteousness He becomes dutiful he goeth to the Peace Imperishable

Through *bhakti*, taking sanctuary in Krishna, all men come unto Krishna,— all, not only Brahmins and *kshatryas* but, also, *vaishyas* and *sudras*, not only men but also women, not only the *raja-rishis* (royal sages) but also they “born of the womb of sin”.

Krishna belongs to all His gospel of love is open to all men and women, all seekers, all aspirants, who turn to Him, who burn candles to Him on the temple-altars of their hearts

For those who take refuge in Me, O Arjuna, though they be born of the womb of sin, though they be women or *vaishyas* (tradesmen) or even *sudras* (serfs), they also reach the highest goal [IX 32]

Unto Arjuna does Krishna appeal — “Arjuna, do not forget

that you are born in this world which is fleeting and joyless
Therefore, do thou worship Me!"

How much more, then, holy Brahmins and devoted royal
saints! Having come to this fleeting, joyless world, do thou
worship Me

Fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me worship Me, bow
down to Me Thus having controlled thyself, and making Me
thy goal supreme, thou shalt come unto Me [IX 33, 34]

"Thou shalt come unto Me"saith the Lord. By giving your
whole heart to Krishna, by loving and adoring Him, worshipping
Him always, and bowing to Him in reverence, you will find
Him,— the Lord of your life and destiny

CHAPTER 10

The Divine Universe

[1]

In Chapter X of the Gita, Krishna's revelation of Himself is continued Krishna declares Himself to be the Source of all and, in knowing Him, we know all Krishna is the All-in-all This is the supreme word (*paramam vachah*) Krishna declares to Arjuna

Krishna is at once Transcendent and Immanent He is the Transcendent Source and the Birthless Origin of the *Rishis* (great sages) and they know not His forthcoming or greatness

Hear again, O Arjuna, My supreme word From a desire to do thee good, I will declare it to thee, for thou art My Beloved

Neither the hosts of gods nor the great sages know My origin for all the gods and all the great sages come from Me

He who knoweth Me, the unborn, beginningless, the mighty Lord of all the worlds,— he among mortals is undeluded and is liberated from all sins [X 1-3]

The Vedas are dumb the mind and breath are stilled the sun and stars are speechless As a child does not know the state of the mother, as waves do not know the sea, as water descended from the mountain cannot rise up, as the sea cannot be held by a wave

nor the universe by an atom, so they know not who Krishna is, and how great!

“He was before all things,” said St Paul. He is “without birth” and “without beginning” He is the great Lord of the universe To know Krishna thus is to be freed from sin

Krishna is not only the transcendent Source He is, also, the Immanent Power

Krishna is not only the Origin of the gods and the *Rishis* From Krishna, too, come the qualities of the human mind

In whatever state of being a man finds himself, whether pleasure or pain, exhilaration or melancholy, fear or fearlessness, fame or ignominy, of that Krishna alone is the Dispenser These and other dispositions of creatures are states that life draws from Krishna

Discernment, knowledge, non-illusion, forgiveness, truth, self-control and calmness, grief and joy, birth and death, fear and fearlessness,

Harmlessness, peace no matter what befalls, contentment, the austere will, the wish to give, fame and ill-fame,— these different states of beings proceed from Me alone [X 4, 5]

From Krishna’s nature and mind (*madhbhava manasa*), too, came (1) the seven great *Rishis*, (2) the ancient four, and (3) the fourteen Manus

The seven great sages, the ancient four, and also the Manus were born of My nature and mind, from them has sprung the race of mankind [X 6]

The seven great *Rishis* are the seers from Bhrigu to Vashishtha they were the teachers of the traditional wisdom

The ancient four were the four Kumaras, virgin youths they, too, were “mind-born” They were Sanata, Sanaka, Sanatana and Sanandana

The *Rishis*, the Kumaras, and the Manus shaped the human race They are His vehicles

[2]

In this chapter, Krishna recounts to Arjuna some of His *vibhuttis*, i.e. objects revealing (1) His lordship or power, and (2)

His immanence in them Krishna speaks of Himself (1) as the chief or Lord of each class, e g , the sun among lights, and (2) as the immanent energy or *shakti* each member of the class exists only through participation in that *shakti*, e g , lights owe their possession of light to the sun

I am the Source of all, from Me the whole creation comes
Understanding thus, the wise worship Me with ecstatic devotion

Their thoughts are fixed on Me, their lives absorbed in Me, enlightening each other and ever speaking of Me, they are content and full of joy

To these, who ever dwell at one with Me and worship Me in Love, I give the yoga of discrimination, by which they come unto Me

Out of pure compassion for them, I dwell within their hearts, and dispel the darkness born of ignorance by wisdom's lamp which burneth bright [X 8-11]

Out of the knowledge of Krishna as the Transcendent Origin and Immanent Energy springs up devotion (*bhakti*) to the Lord The *yogi*, knowing this, is absorbed in Krishna, and so is filled with joy And in compassion, Krishna dwells in the heart of the *yogi* who has *bhakti* Krishna takes into his heart the lamp of wisdom and destroys the darkness born of ignorance

Arjuna wants to know Krishna's *vi bhutis*, i e aspects of Krishna's immanence revealing His pervading powers or God like revelation Arjuna wants to know, as that would help his meditation To know Krishna's *vi bhutis* or immanental aspects would be a help to Arjuna in his meditation on Krishna

Verily, Thou Thyself dost know Thyself through Thy own Self O Man Supreme, the Source of beings, the Lord of creatures, the God of gods, the Ruler of the world!

Thou shouldst tell me, without reserve, of all Thy Forms divine, whereby, pervading these worlds, Thou dost abide (in them and still beyond)

How may I know Thee, O Yogin, by constant meditation? In what aspects art Thou, O Blessed Lord, to be thought of by me?

Recount to me again and at length of Thy yogic power and

glory, for I am never satiated with drinking the nectar of Thy
speech [X 15-18]

[3]

Krishna proceeds to declare some of His *vibhutis* or divine glories Every *vibhuti* is sprung from a part of Krishna's glory And of every *vibhuti*, Krishna is the seed There is no end of His *vibhutis* (glories) A few *vibhutis* are mentioned, by way of example or hint, of the Lord's infinite glory

So be it, Arjuna! I will declare to thee (some) of My forms divine, only those which are prominent, for there is no end to My extent [X 19]

I am the Self, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all creatures I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings [X 20]

Krishna is the Self enshrined in the heart of every creature From Him all beings arise by Him they live and at His word they all depart and meet their final end

Among the Adityas I am Vishnu, among the lights (I am) the glorious Sun I am Marichi of the Maruts, of the stars I am the Moon [X 21]

Adityas are the ancient Vedic gods of light Vishnu is the chief of the Adityas

Marichi is the chief of the Maruts, the gods of storm and blight

Of the Vedas I am the Sama Veda, of the gods I am Indra, of the senses I am the mind, and consciousness am I of living beings [X 22]

The Sama Veda is the most musical of the Vedas

Indra is the god of the firmament According to the Vedas, he stands in the first rank among the gods

The mind is the lord of the senses In Hindu psychology, the senses are controlled and governed by the mind (*manas*)

Of the Rudras I am Shankara (Shiva) of the Yakshas and the Rakshasas (I am) Kubera (the Lord of wealth), of the Vasus I am Agni (Fire), and of mountain-peaks I am Meru

[X 23]

The Rudras are the spirits of storm and destruction

The Yakshas are dwarfish imps with large bellies they are benevolent demons, the Rakshasas being cruel

Meru is the highest peak and is the abode of the gods

Among the household priests, O Arjuna, know Me to be the chief.— Brihaspati, among the (war) generals I am Skanda, among the lakes I am the Ocean [X 24]

Brihaspati is the high priest of the gods

Skanda, the son of Shiva and Parvati, is the chief of heavenly warriors or generals

Of the great *Rishis* (sages) I am Bhrigu, of the words I am the single syllable Om, of offerings I am the offering of *japa* (silent repetition or meditation), of immovable things I am the Himalaya [X 25]

Of all trees (I am) the Ashvattha, of divine *Rishis* (I am) Narada, of the gandharvas (I am) Chitraratha, and of the perfected ones (I am) the sage Kapila [X 26]

Ashvattha is the sacred banyan tree

Narada, the great sage, is known for his music and his indifference to logic and philosophy as means to illumination

Gandharvas are the celestial singers Chitraratha is the chief celestial musician

Of horses, know Me to be Uchchaishravas, born of nectar, of lordly elephants (I am) Airavata, and of men (I am) the Monarch [X 27]

Uchchaishravas is a celestial horse brought forth from the sea of nectar churned by the gods

Airavata is Indra's elephant

Of weapons I am the thunderbolt, of cows I am Kamadhenu, the Cow of Plenty, of progenitors I am Kandarpa, Creative Love, and of serpents I am Vasuki

[X 28]

Of the Nagas I am Ananta, of those that dwell in the sea I am Varuna, of the *pitris* (departed ancestors) I am Aryaman, and of rulers I am Yama, the King of death [X 29]

Nagas are snakes with human heads Their king is Ananta, also

called Sesha, on whom Vishnu rests

Varuna is the god of sea

Aryaman is the leader of the *pitris*, the departed ancestors

Yama and his sister, Yamī, are the first human pair Yama, after death went to the other world and became the law-giver, judge and governor of the dead He is noted for his justice and impartiality and is called *Dharmaraja*

Of Daityas (Titans) I am Prahlada, among those that measure I am Time, of wild animals I am lord of beasts (the lion), and of birds (I am) the son of Vinata (Garuda) [X 30]

Daityas are demons or giants, semi-human beings Prahlada,—one of the greatest devotees of the Lord,— was born amongst them

Garuda is Vishnu's eagle Vishnu's vehicle Garuda is the king of birds and is represented as half-man, half-bird

Of purifiers I am the wind, and among warriors I am Rama, of fishes I am Makara, and among rivers I am the Ganges

[X 31]

Makara is crocodile, shark or whale

The Ganges is regarded as the most sacred of streams

I am the beginning, the end and also the middle of all that is, O Arjuna Of the sciences I am the science of the Self, and I am the logic of those who (rightly) reason (or debate) [X 32]

Of letters I am the letter "A", and of all compounds (I am) the dual I also am everlasting time, and I the Creator whose face turns everywhere [X 33]

"A" is the first letter of the alphabet

The dual is the copulative compound,— compound form of Sanskrit words Thus "Ramalakshman" is a dual This co-ordination of parts makes this form superior to others

Krishna is the endless Life, and un-ageing, everlasting Time He is the Lord of Time and periods of Time

I am Death that destroys all, and (I am) the Source of things that are yet to be Of feminine qualities (I am) fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, firmness, and patient forgiveness [X 34]

Of hymns (I am) Brihatsaman, of metres (I am) Gayatri, of months (I am) Margashirsha, and of seasons (I am) the flower-laden spring [X 35]

The Brihatsaman is one of the great hymns of the Vedas

The Gayatri is a sacred verse of the Rig Veda

Margashirsha (November-December) is regarded as a sacred month

I am the gambler's cunning skill, the splendour of all splendid things am I, success am I, resolve am I, and I am the goodness of the good [X 36]

Of the Vrishnis I am Vasudeva, of the Pandavas I am Dhananjaya (Arjuna), of the sages I am Vyasa, and of poets (I am) Ushana the poet [X 37]

Vrishnis are the descendents of Vrishni,— son of Yadu and great-grandfather of Vasudeva

Arjuna is called Dhananjaya, which means, "winner of wealth"

Ushana was a great poet and sage

I am the Sceptre of those who rule, of those that seek victory I am the Statesmanship, of hidden mysteries I am the Silence, and of the men who know I am the Wisdom [X 38]

And know, O Arjuna, that I am the Seed of all beings Nor is there anything, moving or unmoving, that can exist without Me [X 39]

There is no end to My divine manifestations, O Arjuna What has been spoken by Me is only illustrative of My infinite glory [X 40]

Whatsoever being there is, endowed with glory and beauty and strength, know that to have sprung from a fraction of My splendour [X 41]

But of what use to thee, O Arjuna, is this detailed knowledge? I sustain this whole universe, pervading it with but one fragment of Myself and I abide! [X 42]

Krishna has enumerated some of His endless divine manifestations (*vibhūti*s) in the manifold phenomena, functions, actions and forms of creatures and beings And after His long list of examples, Krishna sums up the whole lesson —

“This whole universe is but one fragment of Myself, its Origin and Support and I abide!”

Krishna pervades the whole universe with one fragment of Himself. Whatever is good and true and powerful and beautiful is but a fragment of that Fragment of Krishna’s splendour, glory (*tejas*). No manifestation and no series of manifestations can exhaust Krishna. All manifestations but dimly reflect a single portion of the Lord.

A single portion is the universe,— but of the Lord. So seen, the universe becomes a divine appearance. So Krishna suggests how we may lift up life from a worldly plane to a spiritual height by trying to see God in the world. Do you see nature? Behold in its wonders the glory of God! Do you look into the mystery of your body and the marvels of your consciousness? Behold in them the glory of God! So may you see, also, the glory of God in the endless procession of great heroes and sages of history, of nations and civilisations stretching back into centuries and ages. The manifestations of the universe disclose the majesty of God. Krishna’s glory and beauty, Krishna’s power and splendour, Krishna’s wisdom and goodness, Krishna’s care and love flow in from every side.

To know this, to see this vision, is to become a *bhakta* of the Lord and to fall in reverence at His Feet. And into the heart of His *bhakta*, Krishna enters and gives him the power to understand and the grace of *gnana*. Krishna dispels His *bhakta*’s fear and ignorance. Krishna fills His devotee’s life with illumination and effulgence of glory.

Krishna's Transfiguration

[1]

Arjuna is glad that his *moha*, delusion, has now been dispersed Krishna's word of the supreme secret,— that He, Krishna, is the Incarnate One, one with Brahman, and immanent in all creation,— has given peace to Arjuna He is no longer perplexed Arjuna says .—

In Thy mercy Thou hast unfolded to me the supreme secret concerning the Self, and Thy words have dispelled my delusion

I have heard in full from Thee, O Krishna, of the birth and passing of beings, and also of Thy imperishable glory

Thou art, O Lord Supreme, as Thou dost say Thou art Yet I desire to see Thy divine form, O *Purushottama* (Person Supreme)!

If Thou thinkest, O Lord, that by me It can be seen, then reveal to me, O Lord of Yoga (Krishna), Thine Imperishable Self

[XI 1-4]

Arjuna has heard from the divine lips of the imperishable glory of Krishna Unto Arjuna hath Krishna told of the origin and dissolution, the birth and passing of all things Arjuna's ears

have heard of Krishna's creative functions But to see is more convincing than to hear So Arjuna requests of Krishna,— the *Yogeshwara*, the Lord of Yoga, of yogic powers,— the boon of a vision of His divine form, His Imperishable Self Arjuna wishes to see the sovereign form of Krishna as the *Parameshvaram* and the *Purushottama*,— as the Supreme Lord and the Supreme Person

Krishna replies that His forms are manifold, various in colours and shapes, reflecting the infinite variety of created beings These forms are from the highest gods (Adityas,— sun spirits, Vasus, Rudras,— storm-spirits, Ashvins,— gods of healing, physicians and helpers in time of need, and the Maruts) to the lower forms,— marvels,— of created things

But the Form of Krishna which He presents to the sight of Arjuna contains all these manifold forms The Form Krishna wishes to reveal to Arjuna is the Form in which Arjuna may see the whole universe, animate and inanimate, gathered and embodied in Himself,— the whole cosmos, movable and immovable, standing in one, concentrated, in Krishna's Body

Behold, O Arjuna, My forms by hundreds and by thousands, various in kind, divine, of innumerable colours and shapes

Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Ashvins, and the Maruts Behold, O Arjuna, many marvels never seen before

Behold here today, O Arjuna, the whole universe with all things that move and move not, and whatever else thou desirest to see,— all concentrated in My Body [XI 5-7]

But such a vision of Krishna's divine Form is impossible with the natural human eye So Krishna gives to Arjuna the "divine eye" (*divyam chakshuh*) One is reminded of the words of the Jewish prophet for his servant — "Lord, open his eyes that he may see!" The "divine eye" is the eye of the seer, the mystic, who sees with the inner sight

But, verily, thou canst not behold Me with these Thine (mortal) eyes, (so) I give unto thee the divine eye Behold My sovereign Yoga (divine power and glory) [XI 8]

[2]

Arjuna is now asked to see in Krishna the vision of the divine

Form Krishna is transfigured In Krishna is seen the whole universe centred Arjuna's privilege it is to see the vision

The vision of Krishna in His supreme Form is that of the Divine Being of innumerable mouths and eyes, with many divine ornaments and many divine (symbolic) weapons and divine necklaces (garlands), and vestures anointed with divine ointments

It was the vision of Krishna as the Eternal God, the God all marvellous, boundless in His universal presence (with face turned everywhere)

With myriad mouths and eyes, with myriad visions of marvel, with myriad divine ornaments and countless godly weapons all upraised,

Wearing celestial garlands and vestures, anointed with heavenly perfumes, full of all marvels, resplendent, boundless, with face turned everywhere

Could but a thousand suns blaze forth all at once in the sky, it would be like the splendour of that exalted Being

[XI 10-12]

The brightness of His glory was as the splendour of a thousand suns blazing out together in the sky

With the divine eye alone could Arjuna gaze into such infinite glory And beholding, he saw, within the body of the transfigured Krishna,—the God of gods,—the whole universe in all its manifold varieties

There did Arjuna behold the whole universe, with its manifold divisions blended into one, in the body of the God of gods

[XI 13]

This ecstatic vision inspires awe and reverence in Arjuna And he bows down his head to the Divine Being Then, with hands folded in reverence, Arjuna says —

Yea! now I see how all is wrapt in Thee !

The gods are in Thy glorious frame, O Lord !

Brahma upon his lotus-throne, and all

The sages and the Serpent Powers divine ! [XI 15]

Arjuna describes what he beholds in this divine vision,—the Body of Krishna containing all the gods and all beings and all

things of every kind Arjuna beholds Brahma, sitting on the lotus issuing from Vishnu's navel, and the *Rishis* and the divine serpents, the masters of wisdom, the divine teachers of the wise on the earth

Thou Lord of all¹ I see Thy arms and breasts,
Thy faces and Thine eyes on every side,
In Form diversified, yet I see not
Thy centre nor beginning nor Thy end !

[XI 16]

Arjuna sees Krishna as the Form, the Infinite-Universal Form of the Infinite Lord, the Form of Infinite forms,— each form with its own mouths, eyes, arms and breasts And in this kaleidoscopic vision of the divine Form, Krishna appears as “without beginning, middle or end” Yet all forms are bound up in His own divine Form

I see Thee with Thy discus, crown and mace
I see Thee glowing everywhere as mass
Of light with blazing brilliance as the fire
That flames, as glowing sun on every side !

[XI 17]

Arjuna beholds Krishna's diadem (a symbol of His sovereignty) and mace and discus (the sacred wheels within wheels) The discus revolves as discus of blazing fire, illumining the sky to immeasurable distance this indicates His Omnipresence He is the Source of life and evolution

Thou art the *aksharam*,— the One Supreme
Thou art the resting-place of all this world
Thou art the Undying Guardian of the Law
Thou art, I hold, the Immemorial Man !

[XI 18]

And Krishna is the supreme Truth (*aksharam*, imperishable) He is the supreme Treasure-house,— the focus,— of the world's plan He is the changeless Guardian of Eternal *Dharma* (Law) He is the Immemorial Man (the Primal Person)

I see Thee, Lord¹ as one who hath no source,
Nor midst, nor end I see Thee as the Might
Supreme Unnumbered arms be Thine the sun
And moon Thine eyes Thy Face a flaming Fire !

[XI 19]

Nor beginning, nor midst, nor end hath He He is the Endless Force The sun and the moon are His eyes And He hath unnumbered arms,— a sign of His omnipotence And His face is as Sacrificial Fire blazing, warming the worlds with its radiance and splendour

This space from bound to bound, from pole to pole
Is full of Thee alone all space is full !
At sight of this, Thy awful, wonder-form,
The triple worlds sink down, O Mighty One !

[XI 20]

He filleth the earth and heavens and all the interspaces stretched between And before His awful Form, the three worlds tremble!

Yon hosts of gods draw nigh and merge in Thee
They fold their hands in fear, invoking Thee !
The *Rishis* and the *Siddhas* cry — “Hail ! Hail !”
And sing the hymn of glory unto Thee !

[XI 21]

The hosts of the gods and great sages (*maharishis*) and perfected ones (*siddhas*) are drawn within Him and worship Him, chanting His praises with songs, and invoking Him with “*svasti*”, “all hail” and conveying to the whole universe the blessings of His glory!

The Rudras and Adityas, Vasus, too,
The Sadhyas, Siddhas, Vishvas, Ushmapas,
The Maruts, Ashvins, Yakshas, Asuras,
And Gandharvas,— all gaze at Thee in awe !

[XI 22]

Rudras (gods of terror), Vasus (gods of wealth), Sadhyas (gods of the intermediate regions between heaven and earth), Adityas (suns), Vishvas (spirits of endurance), Maruts (spirits of air), Ushmapas (heat-drinkers), Gandharvas (angels), Yakshas (spirits of wealth), Asuras (dark spirits),— all, all behold Him, astonished!

The mighty Form of many mouths and eyes,
Of things and feet innumerate, and arms
So vast, and countless bosoms, countless teeth,
The worlds behold and tremble, so do I !

I mark Thee touch the skies, ablaze with hues,
 Thy mouth wide opened and Thine eyes aglow ·
 When I behold Thee thus, my inmost heart
 Doth quake, my strength is fled, I find no peace !
 O, fierce as Time's devouring flames, I see
 Thy mouths with frightful tusks ! Ah me ! I lose
 All sense of where I am I find no peace !
 Have mercy, Lord ! O Refuge of the worlds !

[XI 23-25]

The worlds see terror-struck His terrible teeth they betoken
 His Power of destruction He touches the heavens radiant He is
 rainbow-hued and has shining eyes But His "dreadful teeth" dry
 up strength and peace They are like the Fire of Doom which
 consumes the world at the time of *pralaya* (dissolution)

As He is, in His supreme attributes, the embodiment of
 Perfect Love, so His terrible teeth reveal His sternness as Law,
 the Inexorable Law of Karma

Into thy gaping mouths tremendous toothed
 And terrible to see, they hurrying rush,—
 All sons of Dhritarashtra and, with them,
 The hosts of kings And Bhishma, Karna, Drona,
 And all the noblest warriors of our hosts,
 Some caught between the teeth are seen with heads
 All mangled, crushed and ground to dust and death
 Between Thy jaws they lie,— the best of both !
 As many river-floods do rush to sink
 Into the sea, so do these mighty men,
 These heroes great, rush to Thy flaming mouths !
 Swift, in unending streams and lose themselves !
 As moths which swiftly flutter to a light,—
 A blazing fire,— to meet their doom, so do
 These men, with headlong speed, rush in to meet
 Their doom of death within Thy flaming mouths !
 On every side, with fiery, flaming mouths,
 Thou lickest up the worlds, devouring all
 Thy blazing rays, O Vishnu, still do fill
 The earth from end to end the world doth burn !

[XI 26-30]

Revolving in the wheels of Time, the mighty men of the earth are caught between His teeth in the Law of Karma The Kauravas, the hosts of kings, Bhishma, Drona and Karna and chief warriors rush into Krishna's tremendous teeth

As the rapid streams of full-flowing rivers roll on to sink into the sea, so haste these mighty men of the earth to rush into His flaming mouths

As moths draw, in rapid course, to the flame of fire, and find death, so do the warriors, heroes, kings, lords of kingdoms and dominions, pour into His mouths to their own dissolution, caught between His teeth, their heads to powder crushed

So does He lick up all the worlds around, devouring them with flaming mouths His glory filleth the worlds The universe burneth with His blazing rays

Ah Vishnu! tell me who Thou art why is
Thy Form so full of awe? I worship Thee
Have mercy, God Supreme! I wish to know
Thee, Primal One! For I know not Thy ways!

[XI 31]

Arjuna is bewildered Arjuna does not understand the Lord's ways when he sees the warriors and heroes and kings rushing to destruction in His mouths Arjuna does obeisance to the Terrible Form but begs Krishna to be gracious and to tell him of His own Inner Essence

Arjuna has, through the occult vision granted him by the Lord, seen the universe in one flash of frightful immensity And Arjuna is frightened How natural the desire to see God, to have a vision — a vivid picture, — of the universe! But who can see God and live?

Arjuna sees the Infinite God on all sides, with myriad faces and eyes, with infinite arms and strength, shining as fire, yet consuming the worlds Arjuna sees, in the One Figure of the Lord, the hosts of gods and angels, men and animals, suns and stars, things and beings As moths rush headlong into a blazing fire, so sees he the great ones of the earth rushing into a vortex of world-destroying force. He sees life and death locked up in one awful embrace

Arjuna is amazed Arjuna is awe-struck Arjuna is frightened
 His hair stands on end, his limbs tremble, his mind is
 confounded, he falls prostrate, imploring mercy "O tell me,
 Lord, to what goal Divine such fearful visions tend! Is there a
 purpose, Lord, in this dreadful activity of destruction and
 death?"

[3]

Krishna explains what is the purpose underlying the dreadful
 activity of destruction and death Krishna says —

Lo. Time am I, world-wrecker Time am I!
 The Slayer Time, now ready for the hour
 That ripens to the ruin of all these hosts
 E'en if thou flee, all these shall cease to be!

[XI 32]

"I am *kala*," says Krishna. "I am Time I am Doom come forth
 to destroy the worlds,— and the warriors fighting at the
 Kurukshetra "

In Krishna's Abode, free from the conditions and limitations
 of matter, there is no "Time" But in this desolate world,— the
 broken world of matter and corruption,— "Time" has come into
 being, and is marked by variation of the earth's relation to the
 sun and moon and so are made days and nights, weeks and
 months, years and seasons And because "Time" has come into
 being, we also see "life" and "death" as transitory conditions of
 the earth's existence

And Krishna has supreme authority over "Time" over life and
 death Life and death, limited by time-periods, are in Krishna's
 mind, pre-ordained, pre-destined So apart from Arjuna,—
 without Arjuna's action even,— the warriors drawn up in ranks
 opposing shall not survive Even if Arjuna fails and flees, the
 Kuru warriors will not survive Krishna is the active slayer of
 these men Krishna has slain them already

Arise thou, then! Obtain renown! Fight thou
 Thy foes! The kingdom awaits thee By Me,—
 Not thee,— they all are slain seem thou to slay!
 Be thou My instrument! But strike, O knight!
 Strike thou at Drona! And at Bhishma strike!

At Karna, too and Jayadratha,— all

The warriors here know I do bid them die!.

Be not afraid! Fight thou and slay the slain! [XI 33, 34]

Therefore, Krishna asks Arjuna to “stand up and fight!” Arjuna has to be only the immediate agent, a mere instrument (*nimittamatram*) Arjuna has to be no more than a means Drona and Bhishma and Jayadratha and Karna and all the other warriors are already doomed! Arjuna has only to arise, fight and slay the slain conquer the already conquered

[4]

Having heard these words of Krishna, Arjuna prostrates himself and bursts into an ecstatic hymn of praise. Before Krishna the whole universe, says Arjuna, stands in joy and love While the *Rakshasas*,— dark forces, demons and evil spirits,—terrified, flee away in fear, the saints and sages and the gods bow down in homage before Him For is not Krishna greater than Brahma? Is not Krishna the God of gods? Is He not the Home of the universe? Are not the motions and revolutions of all things to Him and from Him? He is *Sat* and *asat*,— *Sat*, the eternal, and *asat*, all things He is *Tat Param*, That Supreme He is the Eternal Man He is the Treasure-House, the Supreme Receptacle,—Repository,—of all that lives He is the Truth, the All-knower He is, also, the All-known He is the Supreme Abode In His Form is the universe spread And from Him are projected all phenomena,— Vayu (wind), Yama (death), Agni (fire), Moon, Varuna (water), Prajapati

Arjuna thus sees the Lord in another aspect — full of love and beauty, as the Father of the universe, as Teacher, Friend and Beloved of all, as Infinite Love, as Eternal Beauty, as Imperishable Truth, as Undying Life Thus Arjuna's Names of Krishna culminate in the ecstatic exclamation — “O All! Thou are All!”

O Krishna! rightly doth the world delight
In Thy surpassing pow'r and sing to Thee!
The Rakshasas in dread, at sight of Thee,
Do flee and hosts of Siddhas bow to thee!
And how should they not do Thee homage, Lord!
O Thou, Exalted One! Than Brahma great,

The first creator, art yet greater Thou!
 Thou God of gods! Infinite Lord! Aught, naught,—
 The Being and non-being, and what is beyond
 The two,— Transcendent *That*,— the One Supreme!
 Thou art the first of gods th' Eternal Man
 Thou art . in Thee the cosmos safe abides!
 The knower and the known,— the twain in One
 Art Thou! Our Goal Supreme . in Thee is all!
 O Thou art Vayu, wind! And Thou art Yam,
 Death! Agni (fire), and Waves art Thou! And Thou
 The Moon! Prajapati art Thou,— the Sire
 Of all! A thousand times be hail to Thee!
 All hail to Thee in front, behind! And hail
 On every side! O All! In pow'r and strength,
 O Boundless One! Alone, Thou roundest all :
 Thou One in all and, therefore, Thou art All!

[XL 36-40]

Arjuna, recognising now the Supreme Glory of Krishna,— on
 earth his familiar friend,— begs His forgiveness for his ignorant
 familiarity and want of respect in the many close and intimate
 relations he has enjoyed with Him

Sometimes, in rashness, did I speak to Thee
 I thought of Thee my "friend" and, unaware
 Of this Thy greatness, called Thee "Krishna!" "Prince!"
 Or "Comrade!" Out of fondness or at play,
 Or on the bed or seated or at meals,
 Alone or in the throng, I did Thee wrong,
 O Sinless One! For this I pray to Thee —
 "Forgive! forgive my faults! Eternal Lord!"
 For now I know Thou art the Father great
 Of all below, of all above, of all
 The worlds within! The Guru, Teacher Thou,
 Adorable as no one else in all
 The worlds there is none equal unto Thee!
 How then could any one in all the worlds
 Be greater than Thy glory past compare?
 Thou art the Highest, Lord, I worship Thee!
 With body bent and reverent, I bow
 And seek Thy grace, O Lord adorable!

As father with the son, as friend with friend,
As lover with beloved, bear with me!

[XI 41-44]

Arjuna now calls Krishna "Father of the worlds" and as "greater, weightier than any Guru" Arjuna craves His grace And Arjuna implores Krishna to "bear with him as father with the son, as friend with friend, as lover with the beloved "

I have seen That which none hath seen before,—
The marvel of Thy form! My heart is glad
Yet filled with fear! O Lord of Gods! Retake
Thine earthly shape which earthly eyes may bear!

[XI 45]

Arjuna's heart is thrilled for he "hath seen That which none hath seen before" Yet is there fear in his mind, and so Arjuna asks Krishna to show him His Human Form again

I wish to see Thee even as before,
Arrayed with crown and mace and disc in hand,
O Thousand-armed, of Universal Form
Assume Thy four-armed shape in Vishnu's guise!

[XI 46]

Krishna removes Arjuna's self-reproach and points out how Arjuna has beheld the Divine Form which never before was seen by another human in that supreme aspect in which Arjuna hath beheld Him No *yagna*, no Vedic study, no alms, no merit of works, no ascetic austerity, no mortification of the flesh, can win the vision of Krishna's Supreme Divine Form By Krishna's Love and Grace hath Arjuna beheld the Form Divine

Yea! thou hast seen, Arjuna! by My grace,
Through Yoga-pow'r, My Form Supreme, so vast
And wonderful, so radiant, endless, first,
And penetrating all,— which none but thee
Hath seen before! For neither Vedas, Prince!
Nor sacrifice, nor alms, nor rites, nor psalms,
Nor penance long can win with world of men
This vision which was kept for thee alone!
Be not bewildered! Be thou not afraid,
Because thou hast beheld this awful Form!
Be free from fear! Be glad at heart! Behold

Again this long familiar Form of Mine'

[XI 47-49]

Having thus allayed Arjuna's fears and brought happiness to his heart, Krishna resumes His gentle Human Form. Arjuna is reassured. He is no longer terrified. "I am now collected," he says, "and restored to my nature."

Once more I see Thy gentle human Form, O Krishna, and my mind is now composed, and I am restored to my own nature

[XI 51]

[5]

Krishna now proceeds to instruct Arjuna in the method by which a man may know and see the Lord in His Divine Form.

The method of Krishna is different from what so many would expect. So many think that severe self-mortification, physical torture, subtle psychic and magical performances will crush the flesh,— the material and sensual nature,— and enable them to transcend matter and win the vision of the Divine Form. Krishna gives a warning. Not Vedic study, nor austerity, nor gifts, nor rituals, can win the gods or men the vision of the Divine Form.

Hard, indeed, it is to see this Form of Mine which thou hast beheld. The very gods yearn to see this Form.

Yet not by the Vedas, nor by austerities, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifices, can I be seen in the Form in which thou hast seen Me.

But by devotion to Me alone,— devotion undivided,— may I thus be known and seen in essence, and entered into O Arjuna!

Who doeth work for Me, who maketh Me his supreme goal,— he, My devotee, freed from attachment, without ill-will towards any creature, he cometh unto Me, O Arjuna!

[XI 52-55]

So let not a man crave for abnormal powers. The Great Illumination is not there. Powers may be given him without his asking for them. They may come to him when he is found fit by the Lord to use them in His service. Powers come unsought. A man's duty is to dedicate his life in love and devotion to God and to do God's work. Make God the Goal of your life and give your

love to all, without ill-feeling towards any Then are you on the path which will lead you to the Lord.

So Krishna teaches that the way to a vision of the Divine Form,— and the Divine Knowledge and Supreme Wisdom,— is “devotion to Me alone”

Sri Shankar Acharya rightly calls this last *sloka* (No 55) “the essence of the whole Gita ”

CHAPTER 12

The Path Of Devotion

[1]

Krishna is one with the Supreme Brahman, the Imperishable, the Unmanifested, the Formless Absolute Krishna is, also, the Immanent Lord. Which is better, Arjuna asks, to worship Krishna with *bhakti* as the Lord, or to concentrate on the Unmanifest?

In the worship of Krishna, there is (1) *bhakti* or devotion, and (2) *seva* or work offered to the Lord But in the worship of the Unmanifest, there is not *bhakti* but contemplation of the Unmanifest, and work or *seva* is not regarded In the former there is *upasana* in the latter there is contemplation Which of the two is the better way of attainment?

This question arises in Arjuna's mind, in contemplation of the vision of the Divine Form and the resumption of His human Form by Krishna The Supreme is the Unmanifested, the One without a second The Supreme, too, is the manifested Krishna Which is the better course for an aspirant,— to contemplate the Unmanifest or to serve and love the manifested Krishna?

Those devotees who, ever harmonised, worship Thee, and those again who worship the Indestructible, the

Unmanifested,— of these, who is the more learned in yoga?

[XII 1]

Krishna says that both the methods are efficient, and they who contemplate the Unmanifested reach Krishna, too. But man is an embodied being, a part of the divine manifestation · so he finds that the Unmanifested is incomprehensible to him.

Therefore, man is benefited better by fixing his mind on God's manifested aspect. It is easier and more useful to man to realise the manifest God in Krishna than to realise God as an abstraction, as Unknown, Unknowable. Attainment of the manifested Krishna is easier than the attainment of the Unmanifested Absolute.

They who fixing their minds on Me, worship Me, ever harmonised and endowed with faith Supreme,— them do I hold as the best *vogis*.

They who worship the Indestructible, the Indefinable, the Unmanifested, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchanging, the Immutable, the Constant,—

(They who worship thus), restraining their senses, regarding everything equally, rejoicing in the welfare of all beings,— they also come unto Me.

Greater is the toil of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested, for the path of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied to attain.

[XII 2-5]

For men with bodies, it is difficult to reach the Absolute. They who offer all actions to Krishna and hold Him dear, meditating on Him, they are speedily delivered from rebirth. So Krishna asks Arjuna to choose the path of *bhakti* or devotion.

Those who consecrate all their actions to Me, regarding Me as the supreme Goal, and who, with single-hearted devotion, worship Me and meditate on Me,

These, O Arjuna, I swiftly deliver from the ocean of death and lives (that end in death), their minds being ever set on Me.

[XII 6, 7]

[2]

Krishna indicates graded practices of *bhakti* (devotion)

(1) "On Me alone fix thy mind and let thy understanding dwell in Me!"

Steady concentration of mind and *buddhi* on Krishna,— this is the best. Concentrate on the Lord, even in the midst of worldly activities, *Manas* and *buddhi*, mind and understanding,— fix them both on the Lord. Abide in this constant realisation of the presence of Krishna.

(2) "By the yoga of constant practice, seek to reach Me!"

Think of Krishna,— if not without interruption,— again and again. The first refers to a state of constant realisation or *samadhi* which not many may be equal to, all at once. Let such devotees take to "graded practices" (*abhyasa yoga*). *Samadhi* is steady. *abhyasa* involves repetition. By constant practice of meditation they will attain, one day, to the Lord.

(3) "Be intent on My service!"

If you cannot do *samadhi* nor graded practices of concentration, offer all work as sacrifice to Krishna. Make work for the Lord your aim. Perform all actions for Him. Place all your life and deeds in sacrifice and offering to Him. Give up selfish activities and worldly ambitions—they bind to material cares. Be a man of renunciation, a dedicated soul. In every act, seek to serve the Lord. Your service will be worship to Him.

(4) "Renounce all fruit of action!"

If being intent on the Lord's service be hard for you, give up desire for fruit of work. Work without desire! By all means, work for yourself and your family but do not be anxious about the results. Trust in God. Believe that all will be well, for you live under the protection of an all-loving Father! Be self-restrained (*atmavan*) and place all your actions,— successes and failures alike,— in Krishna, abandoning to Him the fruit of every action. Do your duty—don't worry about the results. Accept, in truthfulness, all results as God-sent.

On Me alone fix thy mind and let thy understanding dwell in Me. And without doubt thou shalt live hereafter in Me alone.

But if thou art not able firmly to fix thy mind on Me, then seek to reach Me, O Arjuna, by the yoga of constant practice.

(of concentration).

If thou art unable even to practice (concentration), then be intent on My service Perform actions for My sake, and thou shalt attain perfection

If even to do this thou hast not the strength, then renounce all fruit of actions, seeking refuge in devotion to Me, holding thyself in control [XII. 8-11]

[3]

Krishna emphasises *bhakti* or devotion or love in contrast with the colder forms of approach to the Supreme

Constant practice (*abhyasa*) leads to knowledge (*gnana*) But better than knowledge is *dhyana* or meditation or communion with the Self, the *Atman* within Yet better even than this meditation is loving renunciation of all fruit of work at the Feet of Krishna *Abhyasa*, intellectual *gnana*, and *dhyana* or self-communion,— each has its place in spiritual life But better than these three is the offering of all work to the Lord In this offering is the secret of the dedicated life And out of dedication, springing from devotion to Krishna, cometh serenity, peace

Better, indeed, is knowledge than constant practice (of concentration); meditation is better than knowledge, better than meditation is renunciation of the fruit of action, on renunciation follows peace [XII 12]

[4]

Krishna proceeds to give an outline of the character and blessedness of him who follows the Lord in the path of devotion

Krishna's beloved devotee has his all in Krishna's love. He accepts everything as Krishna-sent

Therefore, he does not hate any being he bears no ill-will to any He is friendly to all . he is compassionate He is without a thought of "I" or "mine" He is calm, come pleasure or pain He has dedicated his mind and understanding to the Lord

He who beareth no ill-will to any being, is friendly and compassionate, free from egoism and self-sense, in pain and pleasure has poised mind, is forgiving,

The yogi who is ever content, ever in harmony and master of himself, resolute, with mind and understanding dedicated to Me,— he, My devotee, is My beloved [XII 13, 14]

He is not a world-disturber,— like so many of the earth's "great men",— and the world does not disturb him He realises that the *Atman* is superior to what the world may give or take away and so in all mortal changes and chances, he is proof against joy, impatience and fear,— against worldly emotions and desires

He by whom the world is not disturbed and who is not disturbed by the world, who is freed from the agitations of joy and anger and fear,— he is My beloved [XII 15]

He is ambition-less . he wants nothing and has no expectation He is pure He is an adept, an expert, in doing right things, being prompt in decisions in emergencies He renounces to the Lord the fruit of every *arambha* (enterprise or undertaking), and so has no fear of future He craves for nothing he grieves at nothing. The Lord is a loving Father the *bhakta* (devotee) has made his life an offering to the Lord Why should the *bhakta* be worried?

He who is ambitionless, is pure, skilful in action, is passionless and free from fear, he who renounces the fruit of every undertaking to Me,— he, My *bhakta* (devotee), is My beloved

He who neither rejoiceth nor hateth nor grieveth nor craveth, he who renounceth good and ill,— he, My devout worshipper, is My beloved [XII 16, 17]

He is alike in praise and dispraise, in honour and disgrace, in fame and ignominy He is satisfied with whatever the Lord is pleased to grant him He is at peace with the world around him He is at peace within himself He is *mauni*, silent He is *aniketah*, homeless He realises that the world is not his home his Home is Krishna! So he stands calm and smiling in all situations of life

Alike to foe and friend, alike in fame and ignominy, alike in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, freed from attachment,

Taking equally praise and blame, silent, content with what cometh, homeless, of steady mind,— he, My devout worshipper, is My beloved [XII. 18, 19]

And the true *bhakta* worships the Holy Law of Blessedness,— as declared by Krishna. It is the Law that leads to the Immortal Goal, i.e. to Krishna. In the Lord is the *bhakta's* fullest faith. He believes in Krishna as the Supreme.

They, verily, who worship this *dharma* (law) of immortality, as taught herein, and, endowed with faith, believe in Me as the Supreme,— they, My *bhaktas*, are My beloved. [XII 20]

CHAPTER 13

Philosophy Of Life

[1]

Krishna expounds a philosophy of life on which, as on a rock, Arjuna may build his destiny. We all need a philosophy of life which may help us in our quest after the Perfect Life

And first, it is necessary to understand the dual nature,— of Man and the Universe This dual nature is,— *Prakṛiti* and *Purusha*. *Prakṛiti* is matter or body it is referred to as the “field” (*kṣhetram*) *Purusha* (the Spirit) is the “Knower” of the field (*kṣhetragña*)

This body, O Arjuna, is called the field He who knows this is called the knower of the field by those that know (the sages)

Know Me as the Knower of the field in all fields, O Arjuna! The knowledge of the field and its knower,— that I regard as true knowledge [XIII 1, 2]

Jesus, in his parable, speaks of the field and the sower. The field is the body, the Sower is Krishna, the Knower, the Christ-within And the seed sown in the field is the wisdom (*gnanam*)

Krishna speaks of *kṣhetra*, *kṣhetragña* and *gñeyam* (what should be known, object of knowledge)

Prakriti is the field . in it things grow and develop, then wither and die, and come forth again *Prakriti* is a scene of activity In *Prakriti* are the fruits of action reaped,— as in a field The function of *Prakriti* is unconscious activity

Purusha is Consciousness, the Conscious Principle, which detached yet lies behind all activity as witness,— as Knower of the field (*kshetragna*)

(*Gnanam*) is the seed sown in the field, the seed of wisdom It is knowledge of (1) the field (*kshetra*), and (2) the Knower of the field

Whatever you see is a combination of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, Spirit and matter, Soul and body The Spirit, the *Purusha*, is the *kshetragna*,— the Knower of the field This knower is Krishna

[2]

The constituents of the field (*kshetra*) are the following 24 principles —

1 *Aryakta*, unmanifest This is *maya*, wherein all enter at the time of involution or *pralaya*

2 *Ahankara*, ego-sense, empiric ego, personality, selfhood, seed of self-consciousness

3 *Buddhi*, reason, understanding, discrimination, intuition Power of direct cognition

4 *Manas* (referred to as *ekam*, one), discursive reason

5-14 Ten *indriyas* (senses) — five *gnana-indriyas*, organs of sense .— eyes (sight), ears (hearing), nose (smell), tongue (taste), touch or organ of action Five *karma-indriyas* or functions — hands, feet, mouth (speech) anus and penis.

15-19 Five domains of the senses (*indriya gocharah*) — touch (*sparsha*), taste (*rasa*), sight (*rupa*), smell (*gandha*), sound (*shabda*)

20-24 Five gross elements (*mahabhutas*) — earth (*bhumi*), water (*apa*), fire (*anata*), air (*vayu*), ether (*khan*)

The *kshetra* has five *vikaras*, evolves transformations, changes, modifications They are —

1 *iccha* and *dvesha*, desire and aversion, like and dislike,

attraction and hatred,

2 *sukham* and *dukham*, pleasure and pain,

3 *sanghata*, collection, idea of bodily combination or body bundle association, collocation, collective form (body),

4 *chetana*, consciousness, intelligence, thought, cognition

5 *dhriti*, firmness constancy, the "will-to-be"

The five gross elements, the sense of "I", understanding as, also, the unmanifested, the ten senses and mind and the five domains of the senses,

Desire and hatred, pleasure and pain, the collective form, intelligence, firmness,— these, briefly described, constitute the field and its modifications [XIII 5, 6]

It may be noted that the psychological functions such as desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, intelligence, firmness, are attributed to the *kshetra*, the field, not to the *Atman* (the Spirit)

The *kshetra* includes both the body and the mind, but not the *Atman*. The *kshetra* is the field of the *Atman*, the *koshas* or sheaths of the Spirit

The *vikaras* (modifications) arise in the *kshetra*, because the *jiva* is associated with *maya*, is not the master of *maya*. *Maya* sways the *jiva* and so in the field (*kshetra*) arise modifications (*vikaras*),— the *jiva* being swayed to and fro

The *Avatara*, too, is, on the plane of manifestation, associated with *maya*, but *maya* does not dominate the *Avatara*. The *Avatara* masters *maya*

[3]

The way of wisdom is now indicated. It has twenty marks. These twenty are the roots of wisdom. And ignorance is all that denies them. He who, in his life, bears these twenty marks achieves wisdom, the liberating realisation. He attains to the radiance of unitive knowledge.

Wisdom, while super-moral, is not non-moral, but asks for cultivation of moral qualities. Conducive to wisdom are moral attributes, virtuous conduct, absence of desire, and attachment, devoted work, devotion, habit of solitude, perseverance, perception of the need of knowledge and insight into the reality

of things

Humility, unpretentiousness, harmlessness, forbearance, rectitude, service of the (spiritual) teacher, purity (of body and mind), steadfastness and self-control,

Indifference to the things of the senses, absence of egoism, recognition of the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain,

Unattachment, absence of self-identification with son, wife or home, and constant equal-mindedness to favourable and unfavourable events,

Unswerving devotion to Me by yoga, resort to lonely spots, distaste for social gatherings,

Constant striving for knowledge of the Spirit, direct intuition of the purpose of knowing Truth,— this is declared to be true knowledge (wisdom) All against this is ignorance

[XIII 7-11]

[4]

The Knower of the field is the *Kshetragna* He is the Supreme Brahman He is devoid of all qualities Therefore, we may speak of Him as neither “being” nor “non-being”, neither *sat* nor *asat* He is beyond being and non-being Of the Supreme both, “It is” and “It is not”, are untruly stated The Supreme Brahman cannot be defined To define Him would be to limit Him

I will declare that which ought to be known, that which being known immortality is attained,— the Brahman, beginningless, supreme, who can be called neither being (*sat*) nor non-being (*asat*)

[XIII 12]

The Brahman is detached yet immanent in *Prakriti*, the non-self, the world Hence the Brahman may be described only in paradoxes He is detached, yet upholds the world He is void of senses, yet supports everything He supports without contact He enjoys *gunas*,— experiences qualities,— yet is free from qualities He feels the *gunas*, yet is above them, pure, divine

Everywhere the Brahman hath hands and feet, everywhere eyes heads and mouths He hears in every place, and He dwelleth in the world enveloping all

He smelleth in all sense-functions but is void of the senses

He is detached, yet He supports everything He is free from qualities (*nirgunam*), and yet is the experiencer of qualities
[XIII 13, 14]

He is without, yet within Significant are the words of Meister Eckhart — “The more God is in all things, the more He is outside them The more He is within, the more He is without ” He moveth yet moveth not He is afar yet close to thee He is far-away to the ignorant, near to the enlightened He is too subtle to be perceptible He is incomprehensible

Without and within all beings is He, still yet movable Too subtle for perception is He And He is at hand, yet far away
[XIII 15]

He is undivided, yet seems to dwell divided Does He not act through living flesh? He has no constituents, yet experiences the influence of those which form the non-self Is He not the cause of development, equilibrium, and dissolution of not-self Does He not support life, devour life, and create life?

Undivided among beings is He, yet is He seated distributively (enshrined in each as if apart) He is the supporter of all beings And he devours life, yet generates life
[XIII 16]

His nature is Light,— the One Sun which illuminates all bodies He is the Light of lights, the holy Light enthroned in every heart He is Knowledge itself, its object and its goal.

The mystic, in his pilgrim-way, journeys from the outer to the inner,— from the world, wherein he sees God’s Hands everywhere and His Feet everywhere, to the heart where he sees enshrined, enthroned, the One beyond all darkness, the Light of lights, the Beloved!

He is the Light of all lights Him they declare to be beyond darkness He is wisdom, the goal of wisdom, to be reached by wisdom He is seated in the hearts of all
[XIII 17]

[5]

These three are to be known — (1) the field (*kshetra*), (2) knowledge (*gnana*),— not empirical knowledge but the knowledge transcendental, and (3) the object of knowledge

(*gneya*)

To know these three principles, to realise them in daily life, is to attain to the Supreme and be healed of sorrow

Thus have I told thee, in brief, concerning the field, knowledge and the object of knowledge My devotee, knowing this, enters into My Being [XIII 18]

He who possesses knowledge attains to love, *bhakti* The Ultimate Reality is apprehended by them who are humble and loving, pure in heart, poor in spirit He who would know, must learn to love We know in love and in the measure in which we love God, we truly live Life should be measured not by years, but by the depth of love

"How old are you?" was the question asked of a mystic, Bayazid And he answered — "Four years " And they said to him—"How can this be?" And Bayazid said — "For seventy years was I veiled from God by the world During the last four years only have I felt Him, the Beloved, and heard Him, the Inaudible, and touched Him, the Intangible Thus for four years only have I lived!"

[6]

Both *Purusha* (the Soul) and *Prakriti* (matter or nature) are without beginning . both precede creation But all changes, modifications, and qualities (*gunas*) originate in *Prakriti*,— are matter-born

Know thou that *Prakriti* (matter or nature) and *Purusha* (Soul) are both without beginning And know thou, also, that modifications and *gunas* (qualities) are born of matter

[XIII. 19]

Slohas 19-23 develop a new thought It bears upon the three principles of (1) *Prakriti*, matter or nature, (2) *Purusha*, the Soul or *Jiva*, and (3) *Purusha Parah*, the Supreme Spirit.

Both *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are beginningless (*anadi*), for they come out of the Eternal, the Supreme Spirit. The *Purusha* or the *Jiva* (the Soul), in association with matter (*Prakriti*), falls into an enjoying mood The *Jiva* has free-will He misuses it and submits to the tyranny of pleasure, within the bonds of time and space

When greed or external restless activity predominates, it means *rajas* prevails. Zeal for work is a mark of the man of *rajas*.

The man of *rajas* is always in the midst of struggle and work. He has a strong desire to assert and achieve. He struggles hard to show or establish his superiority over others. He goes about in life, not as a servant of Krishna, but as the proud lord of all he surveys. The man under the influence of *rajas* is the man of action, of initiative, of inordinate ambition and restlessness.

Break the bondage of work through work. How? Make your work an offering to the Lord. Convert work into *yagna*, a sacrificial offering of love.

But *tamas* (all bewildering darkness), know thou, is born of ignorance and is the deluder of souls. It bindeth by heedlessness, indolence and sleep, O Arjuna! [XIV 8]

Tamas is neither light nor energy, but lethargy, listlessness, delusion. *Tamas* is darkness. It is a delusive child of ignorance. It binds the soul to *Prakṛiti* by heedlessness, indolence and sleep.

When darkness and inertia predominate, you have a sure sign that *tamas* prevails.

In the man of *tamas*, the forces of matter predominate and he lives like the lower animals. He eats, drinks and sleeps. He lives from moment to moment. He tries to satisfy his bodily appetites. He does not bother himself about ideals in life. He is slothful, negligent, deluded and ignorant.

Break the bondage of *tamas* by doing your appointed task, by fulfilling your *dharma*, by taking your place at the station of life, however humble or insignificant. Nothing is really insignificant. Remember, it is not to the giant oaks only that the wind speaks. The voice of the wind cometh, also, to the little blades of grass.

Sattva bindeth to happiness, *rajas* to action, O Arjuna! And *tamas*, having shrouded wisdom, bindeth to heedlessness (or negligence).

When *sattva* overpowers *rajas* and *tamas*, *sattva* prevails, O Arjuna! When *rajas* overpowers *sattva* and *tamas*, *rajas* prevails. And when *tamas* overpowers *sattva* and *rajas*, *tamas* prevails.

When the light of wisdom streameth forth from all the gates

of the body, then it may be known that *sattva* predominates

When greed, external activity, zeal for work, restlessness, envious desire are conspicuous, know that *rajas* predominates, O Arjuna!

When darkness, inaction, heedlessness and delusion are conspicuous, know that *tamas* predominates, O Arjuna!

[XIV 9-13]

[4]

The *sattvic* man goes, after death, to spotless spheres of the wise, but he has yet to attain After death, he proceeds to high places, the celestial realms of *Devachana*, for a period of rest He comes back to the wheel of birth and death, but is born in a home of the lovers of God He dwells among the pure and takes up the thread of evolution where he left it in his previous birth

If *sattva* prevaileth when (the body of) the embodied soul dies, then he goeth forth to the spotless worlds where dwell those who know the Highest [XIV 14]

The *rajasic* man is re-born among those attached to action And if a man dies under the dominant influence of *tamas*, he is re-born in the "wombs of the senseless"

Meeting with death when *rajas* prevails, he is born among those attached to action, and if (the body) dies when *tamas* prevails, he is born in the wombs of the senseless [XIV 15]

[5]

The work done under the influence of *sattva* is spotless and full of purity The work done under the influence of *rajas* bears painful fruit (*dukkha*) And the work done under the influence of *tamas* bears the fruit of what is worse than *dukkha*, viz ignorance (*agnana*)

The fruit of *sattvic* action is said to be harmonious and pure, the fruit of *rajas* is pain and the fruit of *tamas* is stupidity, ignorance [XIV 16]

[6]

Conquer the three *gunas*, Arjuna! Be a seer! The seer

realises —

(1) that liberation is won by him who knows that it is the *gunas* out of which proceedeth action, work, and

(2) that there is One Beyond, the Supreme He is higher than the *gunas* *Gunas* are the seed in the *Prakriti* out of this seed, the body grows So out of *Prakriti* are produced the *gunas*

The wise man “crosses over” the three *gunas*, controls them conquers them, so that they move in rhythm and harmony,— as one whole,— with the wisdom of Krishna They who know this are liberated from birth and death they drink the waters of immortality

When the seer perceiveth no agent other than the *gunas* (qualities of nature) and knoweth That which is beyond the *gunas*, he entereth into My being

When the embodied soul hath crossed over the three *gunas*,— whence all bodies have been produced,— then, indeed, freed from birth and death, from old age and sorrow, he drinketh the waters of immortality [XIV 19- 20]

[7]

The man who has crossed beyond the three *gunas* is become the master of matter His marks are these —

(1) He is indifferent to the three *gunas* when they are in action and when they cease to act, for he realises that each one has his own evolution

(2) He is undisturbed by the results of action, good or evil He realises that all activity belongs to the *gunas*, *Prakriti* He sees the *gunas* at work and is seated in their midst, indifferent, unconcerned Unshaken is he by the *gunas* “It is *gunas* that move,” he says “Objects are toys they dance to the tune of *gunas* ” He himself is a pilgrim As dreams do not disturb the awakened one, so *gunas* do not bind him

(3) All things and beings and states are to him, alike Indifferent is he to “pairs of opposites” So is he the same to friend or foe, the same in love or dislike, in censure and in praise And to him a clod, a stone and gold are alike

(4) He does all work without desire He hath abandoned all ambition,— undertaking, enterprise

He who doth not shun the light (of knowledge) or activity or delusion, when they arise, nor yearneth for them when they are absent;

He who sitteth unconcerned, undisturbed by the *gunas*, standing apart, without being shaken, knowing that it is only the *gunas* that act,

He to whom pleasure and pain are alike, who is centered in his Self, to whom clod or stone or gold are one, who is the same to loved and unloved, whose mind is steady, who remains the same in censure and in praise,

He who looks equally upon honour and dishonour and is the same to friend and foe, who has abandoned all ambition,— he is said to have crossed over the *gunas*

[XIV 22-25]

What is the way which a man may tread to cross the *gunas* and become one with the Eternal? It is the way of (1) exclusive, unswerving devotion, and (2) loving service to Krishna In love, he annihilates himself and enters into union with God he becomes nothing, a zero, and is united with the One Such a man realises the *atmasvarupa* He enters into Krishna the Eternal and becomes the Eternal

He, who serveth Me with unswerving devotion, passes beyond the *gunas* and becomes one with Brahman [XIV 26]

To love Krishna is to be one with Brahman, for in Krishna rests Brahman Indeed, for the *bhakta*, Krishna is Brahman And in Krishna is the source of (1) Immortality, and (2) the Eternal Law of Right (*dharma*), and (3) the Bliss that knows no equal and no end,— Bliss absolute.

For I am the abode of Brahman, the inexhaustible nectar of immortality, (I am the ground) of Eternal Righteousness and (the source) of unending Bliss [XIV 27]

Brahman is Krishna . Krishna is Brahman There is the unity of the Twain. Brahman becomes Krishna to show grace to *bhaktas* Krishna is Brahman in manifestation

CHAPTER 15

The World Tree

[1]

Krishna pictures *Prakriti* (cosmos, the world) as the Ashvattha Tree

The word “ashvattha” means “not stable”, “in a flux” The Ashvattha was, in popular belief, a tree growing with its roots spread above, its branches below Is not the world such a tree? The ashvatha is the banyan tree Is not the world the Eternal Banyan? It proceedeth from *avyakta*, *maya* but above it is God But only men of *vairagya* (detachment) will see the world-tree in God and know that its Root rises upward in the Eternal

Of this Cosmic or World-tree,— the Tree of *Prakriti*,—the roots rise upward, i.e. are above the ground or the visible world The root is high above in the *avyakta*, the unmanifest the root is *maya*

The tree has leaves they are the Vedic *mantras*, hymns The leaves give shade and shelter So in life’s journey, in this world, men may find shade and shelter in the Vedic hymns, in the great thoughts and *mantras* of the *Rishis* and the sages

With roots which upward rise and with branches which descend, the Ashvattha (the eternal banyan tree) is said to be indestructible Its leaves are Vedic hymns He who knoweth

the tree, he knoweth the Vedas

[XV 1]

The Tree has branches, some shooting upward and some which descend downward to the earth. The branches represent *jivas*. The “upward” branches represent gods, the “downward” branches represent human beings, animals, reptiles and insects.

The branches are nourished by water, moisture, exhalation. This is represented by the three *gunas*. Alas! men are caught up in the *gunas* and in sense-entanglements. Men seldom see that the root of the Cosmic Tree rises upward in the Eternal. The *gunas* are the water of the branches.

The Tree is nourished by the three *gunas* (qualities of *Prakṛiti*) the *gunas* are the water of the Tree.

The Tree has its twigs, shoots or buds. These are the external objects (*vishayas*).

The Tree has secondary roots. Roots bind a tree to the soil. And these secondary roots, too, bind. They are bent down into the earth, binding the Tree. These downward roots are *vasanas*, *trishnas*, *raga-dvesha*, desires. They bind the tree in bonds of *karma* (action), objects and results of *karma*. They bind to birth and death. These secondary roots (*vasanas*) lie hidden below the ground and they bear fruit of *karma* in the world of men, binding them to the wheel of birth and death.

Downward and upward spread the branches of the Tree. It is nourished by the *gunas* (qualities). The objects of the senses are its buds. Downward, too, grow its (secondary) roots, they bind as bonds of action in the world of men.

[XV 2]

[2]

Men, alas! do not see the Tree as a whole. They do not understand its significance. They are absorbed in the leaves and fruits and twigs of the Tree, they are lured by sense-attractions.

The Tree seems endless. Who knows its beginning? Who knows its ending? Does it not proceed from *maya*? Has *maya* a beginning or an ending? *Maya* is *avyakta*.

Men do not understand this Tree. It is *mayatic*, it is a mirage. Do not wander in this strange world-tree. You will not find a way.

out of its puzzle-paths You must cut it down So may you find the way whence you will not return,— the way that will win you release from re-birth and take you to your Home, the Eternal Abode of Krishna

How may the Tree be cut down? And what is the Abode, the Home, whence the *jiva* returns not to the wheel of birth and death?

The Tree is to be cut down by the weapon, the sharp axe of non-attachment

Not here may be discerned the real form of this Tree, nor its end, nor its origin, nor its foundation Strongly-rooted is the Ashvattha Tree Cut it down by the weapon of non-attachment

So may you tread the path from which there is no return for so may you reach that Primal Person from whom streamed forth the Ancient Energy (the cosmic process) [XV 3, 4]

The way of detachment is repeatedly emphasised by the Gita “He whose self is not attached to the external objects,” we read, “he obtains the happiness that is within his own Self ” And again — “He who casting off all desires lives free from attachments, he obtains tranquillity ”

Freedom from all attachments,— is essential to union with God The *jiva* must renounce attachment to money, possession, property, attachment to house, family, country, must renounce all earthly affection Jesus asked his disciples to renounce exclusive family ties Private affections and preferences imprison the *jiva* St John of the Cross says — “The soul that is attached to anything, however much good there may be in it, will not arrive at the liberty of divine union For whether it is strong wire rope or a slender delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast For until the cord be broken, the bird cannot fly So the soul, held by the bonds of human affections, however slight they may be cannot, while they last, make its way to God!”

Not merely must we resist running after *vishayas*, sense objects we must have no relish for them The will-to-live in God means the will-to-possess nothing, to have nothing, to be nothing In being nothing, is the greatest blessing of the *jiva*

More than wealth and goods and the world's honours, the greatest hindrance is the self. Detachment is a sacrificial act; detachment means surrender of the little self. You may renounce wealth and comfort but you do not practise detachment until you renounce the "ego". As a Sufi teacher says — "To no purpose do you change your dress and food. If you eat a single blade of grass in a lifetime, if you remain clad in a single garment for a thousand years, if you are shut up in a cell away from the sight of men,— beware, lest you are deluded. All these are but the subtleties of the desire-nature, its cunning and craft."

He is truly detached who hath surrendered his self to the Lord. Such a man desires nothing, asks for nothing, but adores the Will of the Lord — "Thou knowest what is best for me." Some one said to the Sufi mystic, Junayd Baghdadi — "Why don't you ask the Lord to grant you Divine Vision? He will deny you nothing!" The Sufi mystic said — "This have I been taught,— to desire nothing, to ask for nothing. Moses asked for a vision of God and was denied it. Mahomed was blessed with the Vision without asking for it. When the time is ripe, the Lord will Himself remove the veils and the Divine Face will be revealed unto Me."

With the weapon, the sword, the axe of self-abnegation, hew down the Ashvatha Tree and its deeply embedded roots. So may the *Adi Purusha*,— the Primal Person,— whenceforth streamed the Ancient Energy,— the sap that floweth through the universe of the not-Self, *Prakriti*, the Cosmos, the Ashvattha Tree,— be revealed. So may a man win release from re-birth and reach the Eternal Abode of Krishna, whence there is no return.

To the Home, the Indestructible Home to Krishna's Abode go the *vairagis*. They are humble and undeluded; they are victorious over attachment, desire and emotion; and they abide in the *Adhyatman*, the Inner Self. These blessed ones dwell in the Eternal Home of the Lord. And Krishna's Abode needs no sun nor moon nor any fire to give it brightness.

They go to that Indestructible Home, who have no pride and no delusion (*moha*), who victorious rise over the vice of attachment, who dwell constantly in the *Adhyatman* (the Self).

The *Jiva* is, essentially, spiritual, but is offered a free choice to come to the Lord and be devoted to Him in love and service, or to offer salutations to *maya*. When the *Jiva* chooses to be a slave to *maya*, he turns his face away from God. Swayed by the desire for pleasure, the *Jiva* falls from the realm of Eternal Light and, enthralled by *maya*, is cast within the bonds of earthly limitations. The *Jiva* wanders in the wheel of birth and death.

Matter or Nature is said to be the Cause which generates causes and effects, the Soul is said to be the Cause of the experience of pleasure and pain.

The Soul seated in matter tasteth the qualities born of matter. Attachment to the qualities is the cause of his births in good and evil wombs. [XIII 20, 21]

There is the *Purusha Parah*, the Supreme *Purusha*. He, too, dwells in the body. He is the *Parama-atma*, the Supreme Self. He is the Maheshvara, the Great Lord. And He, dwelling in the body, watches the actions of the *Jiva*, permits them, bears them, experiences them. He abides in all beings.

In the body (of man) dwells the Supreme Spirit. He is said to be the Observer, the Permitter, the Supporter, the Experiencer, the Great Lord and the Supreme Self.

[XIII 22]

When, by a wrong choice, the *Jiva*, the soul, falls into matter, the *Parmatman*, the eternal comrade of the Soul, accompanies him. The *Parmatman* does not let the *Jiva* go, however far he may go astray. By dwelling within the *Jiva*, the *Parmatman* educates, influences, instructs and, at last, saves the *Jiva*. Not a single soul is, in the long run, lost. The *Parmatman* is the Supreme Spirit, the "Holy Spirit". In Him is the hope of the sundered, separated *Jiva*.

[7]

Knowledge of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* (with the three *gunas*) leads to liberation.

He who thus sees the Supreme *Purusha*,— the Lord,— he truly sees, he truly knows, and he is truly free.

He who thus doth know *Purusha* and *Prakriti* with its

qualities, in whatsoever condition he may be,— he is not born again [XIII. 23]

Four methods there be which lead to perception of the Supreme *Purusha* and to Freedom —

(1) Meditation (*dhyana*) Some see the Supreme through meditation It is the calm, uninterrupted concentration of mind on the Supreme It is communion with the Self within

Silence is essential to meditation Speech is often dissipation of energy Silence unites the heart to God Silence saves us from many disorders of the heart and will To be shut up for some time, each day, with God, is to grow in the life which is life, indeed Are you occupied too much with outward things? Your heart will shrink It is good for our growth to build solitude within ourselves, in which the soul dwells in fellowship with the Life Divine

There are aids to meditation One simple is *japa*, repetition of the Divine Name or the *mantra* The shorter the *mantra* or phrase or word, the better Such a word is “God”, or “Allah” or “Hari” or “Rama” or “Krishna” or “Christ” or “Mother (*Ma*)” or “Love” Choose whichever you are attracted to Fasten the one word to your heart and let the word go with you in your daily work and your daily life The word will keep you awake If a doubt crosses your mind, if a temptation or trouble presses upon you, answer with this one word Repeat the one word, until it penetrates your soul, and you hear it with your heart, and see it in an integral intuition, and your whole being, gradually, becomes this one word

Meditation, too, on an image may be helpful for certain persons, in certain circumstances

(2) Sankhya method, the method of intellect or knowledge, actionless comprehension of the Self as distinguished from the not-Self

(3) Method of will, *karma yoga*, discipline of work, desireless and sacrificial action

The *karma-yogi* seeks to realise the Supreme through the discipline of work, selfless work He dedicates the fruits of all his actions to God The *karma-yogi* lives a disciplined life, a life of

purity And in all actions, he seeks the will of God The *karma-yogi* surrenders his will to the Will of God

(4) Method of *upasna* This is the method of worship in accordance with the instructions received from a teacher This is the method of *shruti* (what is heard from others) This is the method of the less gifted They adhere to what the *shastras* (scriptures) tell them they do accordingly They, too, who worship thus ultimately win release they cross beyond death

Some by *dhyana* (meditation) behold within them the *Atman* through the *Atman*, others behold by the Sankhya Yoga (the path of knowledge), others behold by the Yoga of Action

Others again, ignorant of these (paths of yoga), worship, having heard (of it) from others, and they, too, cross beyond death, their refuge being the scripture (*shruti*) [XIII 24, 25]

[8]

The Supreme Lord dwells alike in all Therefore, give up the delusion of inequality All must be esteemed equal Be not proud of thy rank and title, thy riches and renown Look upon no creature with contempt God is great in the great and the small

He who sees the Supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the Imperishable within the perishable,— he truly sees

[XIII 27]

He is the “Imperishable within the perishable” St Catherine of Sienna, in her communion with Jesus Christ, asked — “Who am I, Lord? And tell me who Thou art!” And the answer came to her — “My daughter, thou art that which is not, and I am that which is!”

The “perishable” is the “world of becoming”, the *sansara* But within it dwells the Imperishable The *sansara* is a tabernacle of the Lord Therefore, have reverence for all Therefore, rejoice and sing His glory The world is a Mirror of His Beauty, and nature is a Temple of His Light

[9]

There is a “self” in man that perverts it is the lower self The

true seeker does not cause his own destruction by letting the lower self do harm. Rather does the seeker perceive the immanent indwelling of the Lord and so, treading the highest path, presses on to liberation.

Seeing, indeed, the same Lord equally dwelling everywhere, he doth not destroy the Self by the self, and thus attaineth the supreme Goal [XIII 28]

[10]

Prakriti (nature) works, performeth actions, but the Self (*Atman*) is actionless. The Self is the witness, not the doer.

He who sees that all actions are performed by *Prakriti* (nature) and that the Self is actionless,— he truly sees [XIII 29]

The universe of manifestations,— appearance,— is rooted in the One. To see this is to reach Brahman, the Eternal.

When he perceives that the diverse forms of life are all rooted in the One and are spread forth from the One, then he attains Brahman [XIII 30]

The *Parmatman*,— the Indwelling Supreme,— is changeless, without beginning, without constituents or qualities (*gunas*). Seated in the body, He is not contaminated. He is imperishable. He is immanent but worketh not, and is not affected.

The Imperishable Supreme Self, O Arjuna, is without beginning and without qualities. And though He is seated in the body, yet He acteth not nor is He affected by action [XIII 31]

Like ether, subtle and undefiled, though it penetrates the whole universe, the Self (*Atman*), seated everywhere in the body, is stainless.

As ether, though present everywhere, is not tainted, by reason of its subtlety, so the Self, though seated everywhere in the body, is free from taint [XIII 32]

Even as the one sun giveth light to the whole world, even so doth the Lord of the field illumine the whole field, O Arjuna! [XIII 33]

The Supreme Self is compared to the sun. Socrates was pressed by a disciple to show him the "Good" whereof Socrates often spoke. And Socrates said — "That is not possible. But I can show you Its offspring, a being as like the Good as a babe may be to its father." And then Socrates led him out and pointed to the sun in the sky.

The sun illumines the field of nature but is not tainted, contaminated by aught in nature. So the Supreme Self dwells in all, but remains pure.

Again, the sun is immeasurably distant yet intimately near to every one. So is the Supreme Self, infinitely great, yet intimate with all, dwelling in all.

They who, by the eye of wisdom, see this distinction between the field and the Knower of the field, and (—who understand) how beings may be released from *Prakṛiti*,—liberated from matter,— they verily, go to the Supreme

[XIII 34]

CHAPTER 14

Conquest Of the Three Qualities

[1]

In Chapter XIV, Krishna interprets the knowledge regarding the three *gunas* (qualities), their relation to *Prakriti* and their conquest by the sages. In the conquest of the three qualities is the supreme Wisdom of life. Having gained this wisdom, wise men, *munis*, sages, attain to supreme Perfection. It is *Nirvana*, *Pari-nirvana*.

Taking refuge in this Wisdom, they are changed into Krishna's Nature. They grow into the Image of Krishna. This is the life of fellowship with Krishna. They have assimilation with Krishna's Essence—they become one with Krishna.

And becoming one with the Lord, they win release from re-birth. They are not re-born, even when the worlds are born—and they are not disturbed, even when the worlds go into dissolution.

Once more will I declare to thee that supreme Wisdom,—of all wisdom the best,—having known which, all sages have gone hence to the highest Perfection.

Taking refuge in this Wisdom, they become of like nature to Me. They are not re-born at the time of creation, nor do

[2]

Great Brahma (*mahad brahma*) or *Maya* is the womb of Krishna In this womb, Krishna sows the germ, the seed of all being

Mahad brahma is *Prakriti* it is the womb Krishna is the "Sower" who sows the seed Krishna is the Father who deposits in Nature's womb the seed of Life So Krishna causeth the birth of every individual Krishna is the "seed-giving" or generating Father

My womb is the great-Brahma, in that I deposit the seed, and from it is the birth of all beings, O Arjuna!

In whatsoever wombs, forms (of life) are produced, O Arjuna, great-Brahma is their womb, and I am the Father who sows the seed [XIV 3, 4]

In every *jiva*, there is the seed of life This seed of life, says the Gita, is of God What a thrilling thought! The seed of God is in us. The seed of God is in every one, "Pear seeds grow into pear trees, nut seeds into nut trees, and God seeds into God," says Eckhart. Alas! we are often ego-centric but we should be God-centric. The seed of God is in us!

[3]

Of *Prakriti* or Nature there are three strands or ropes They are the three *gunas* All actions are performed through the three *gunas* (qualities) They are matter-born and they bind the soul to the body They fetter the *jiva* in the body

Sattva, *rajas*, *tamas*, the three qualities (*gunas*) are born of *Prakriti* (nature, matter) They bind fast in the body, O Arjuna, the Imperishable that dwelleth in the body

Of these, *sattva*, from its purity, brings illumination and health It bindeth by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge, O Arjuna! [XIV 5, 6]

What is *sattva*? Purity or Light It makes the *jiva* eager for knowledge and virtue But even "Light" binds *jiva* to the body, the flesh, when it causes attachment There are scholars eager

for knowledge their joy is in study and scholarship But they develop an attachment to knowledge, and will not easily renounce the scholar's way And they do not cease to be ego-centred They have a tendency towards introversion, self-analysis, scholarship, thought, these become to them "ends" and are not "means" to the ultimate transcendence of thought and scholarship They are *sattvic*, but not God-centred

Think of Nietzsche What a noble soul! In his private life, he was pure as a maiden His admirers called him a "saint"

He protested against vulgar money-making Lonely, was his soul, but not in communion with God He was "ego-centred", not "God-centred" His thought eclipsed the Spirit He despised the masses He misunderstood Christ He asked for leaders who would "deduce their rights" not from God nor from the people, but who would "boldly rule in their own right, because they are stronger!" Here is the difference between the scholar's knowledge and true enlightenment Knowledge is ego-centred enlightenment is centred in the Spirit

In the West, there are many scholars of *sattvic* temperament but their concern is less with Eternity than with "future time" and "present time", with plans and programmes of reform and progress In India, even after two centuries of Anglicisation, the truth is still not forgotten that the final end of life is unitive knowledge of God,—enlightenment, *mukti*, emancipation from bondage of matter and self And so, even today, you may find men who, in middle life, give up position and power, wealth and academic pursuit, to become *jñāṣus*, seekers after enlightenment, seekers after God, and endeavour to transcend the *sattvic* life to a life of contemplation and one-pointed devotion to the Divine Reality

Rajas is energy, mobility, passion *Rajas* is *trishṇa*, a thirst for life *Rajas* is passionate energy

Rajas is the child of strong desire and attachment It binds the soul to *Prakṛiti* by activity

Know thou, O Arjuna, that *rajas*, which is of the nature of passion, is the source of attachment and thirst And *rajas* bindeth the embodied soul by attachment to action [XIV 7]

within), whose desires have departed, who have been liberated from the *dvandas* (pairs of opposites) of pleasure and pain

Nor sun, nor moon, nor fire shineth there nor any one who goeth there ever returneth It is My supreme Abode

[XV 5, 6]

[3]

In this Cosmic Tree of *Prakṛiti* appear *jīvas*, individuals Whence are they?

The *jīva* (individual) is a fragment of Krishna An eternal portion or spark of Krishna appears in the world of life as individuals (*jīva-bhūta*), souls who move about in different bodies All *jīvas*, living souls, proceed from Eternal Krishna This is forgotten by man, for he is absorbed in the leaves and fruits of the Tree

A fragment of Krishna is “veiled in matter”, rests in *Prakṛiti*, draws in space from matter the senses (*indriyas*), six in number,— five of which are the sense-organs and the sixth is the mind

An eternal portion of Mine own Self is transformed, in the world of life, into a living soul, and draweth round itself the senses of which the mind is the sixth,— veiled in matter

[XV 7]

Krishna is the *Adi Puruṣa* (the Primal Person) (1) in *jīvas* (separate bodies) and (2) in the Cosmos as a whole Krishna is the Indwelling Spirit of every *jīva* or soul Krishna is *Adhyatman*

[4]

The *Ātman* is enshrined in, presides over, the ear, the eye, the skin, the tongue, the nose and the mind And through this association with the senses and the mind, the *Ātman* frequents, enjoys, experiences the world of sense Yet the *Ātman* dwells in the *Ātma-dhama* and only becomes manifest in the body

But this perception cometh to the wise, the yogis, not to the deluded, the mindless, for their hearts are not pure

Enshrined in the ear, the eye, the skin, the tongue and the

nose.— and in the mind, also,— He enjoyeth the objects of the senses

The deluded do not perceive Him when He departeth or resteth or feeleth, in association with the *gunas* But the who have the eye of wisdom, see

The *yogis* also, striving, see Him within, but the unintelligent, who are not purified, they struggle but see Him not [XV 9-11

Krishna is the Life of the Universe, as a whole

He is the light in sun and moon and fire by which all things are sustained Life, in its fullness, is in Krishna The sun, the moon, the stars,— all are the splendour of Krishna

He is the *soma*, the moisture in the moon, that falls by night to nourish herbs Krishna is the vital Essence supporting all life on earth, the sap of trees and plants and herbs

Krishna is the inner Fire, the Fire of life, the vital Force that enables creatures to digest food and so to eat and live Krishna is the Breath of life, the Cause and Source of nourishment

He is seated in the hearts of all and bestows on men memory, knowledge, and conviction (power of reason which removes negation or doubt or false judgements).

And He is revealed by all the scriptures and He is the Genius and Inspiration of the Vedas He is the Comprehender of the Vedic truths and He is the Author of the “end of the Vedas”, i.e. the Upanishads or the Vedanta

The splendour that issues from the sun and illumineth the whole world, that which is in the moon and in the fire, that splendour know as from Me

Entering the earth, I support beings by my vital energy and having become the delicious *soma-juice* (or moisture), I nourish all plants

Having become the fire of life, seated in the bodies of breathing beings, and blent with the life-breaths (outward and inward), I digest all nourishment (four kinds of food)

And I am seated in the hearts of all, and from Me arise memory and *gnana* (knowledge) and (the power which removes) doubt or negation And Me the Vedas reveal, and I the Vedas know, and Author am I of the Vedanta,— the “end

[5]

There be three *Purushas*, three persons,— three energies in the universe — (1) *Kshara-prakriti*,— or the changeful, the perishable, the temporary, the forms of finite life (2) *Akshara-prakriti* or *kutastha* (rock-seated inside *maya*),— the *avyakta jiva*, the *chaitanya shakti*, from which the perishable takes birth (3) *Uttama Purusha*, *Purushottama*, *Paramatman*, Supreme Self He is the Transcendent Spirit and, also, the Immanent Supporter and Eternal Governor of the Universe The third Person,— *Purushottama*,— is Krishna

In chapter VII, Krishna called *Purusha* and *Prakriti* as His two *Prakritis* In chapter XV, here, He calls them the two *Purushas* The two are *Purushas*,— Energies,— for they are the *upadhis* of the One Supreme *Purusha*, the *Purushottama*

Krishna is the *Purushottama*, the Person Supreme, transcending both *kshara* and *akshara*

There are two *Purushas* (energies) in this world, the perishable and the imperishable The perishable is all beings, the imperishable is called *Kutastha* (rockseated, veiled in mystery, seated inside *maya*)

Another *Purusha* there is,— the Highest,— declared as the *Purushottama* (Supreme Self) He pervadeth all, He sustaineth the three worlds He is the Indestructible Lord

Since I transcend the perishable and I am higher, also, than the imperishable, alike in the world and in the Veda, I am known as the Supreme Person [XV 16-18]

The knowledge of Krishna as the *Purushottama* leads to *bhakti* (devotion)

He who, undeluded, knoweth Me thus as the *Purushottama* (the Person Supreme), he knoweth all and he worshippeth Me with all his soul, O Arjuna!

Thus have I told thee the most secret teaching, Arjuna! He who knoweth this, he is illuminated and his labours are finished, O Arjuna! [XV 19, 20]

This knowledge giveth understanding Finished are the man's

labours Then he understands that even the good things of life— friends, loved ones, riches, health, knowledge,— are but “flowers” and “fruits” he receives them as gifts from the *Purushottama* to strengthen him in his pilgrimage but he does not forget that his goal is God Even the most precious things of the world have to be passed by, left behind, to reach the Home He is a *vairagi* All things perish but Krishna is Eternal Such a man does his daily work, but he has gone beyond “duty” to *Nirvana*, the Great Mystery of illumination and adoration

CHAPTER 16

The Divine And The Demoniac

[1]

In this world there are two types of men,— the divine and the demoniac

The divine men are fundamentally spiritual. They are *jivas* who, living in this world, are not swayed by *maya*. They remember the pledge of purity they took in their true, their spiritual Home. And in this world they show, in their thoughts, aspirations and actions, that desire (*trishna*) does not dominate them. They walk the way of yoga, keeping themselves detached from *bhoga*. They show, from their very birth, tendencies to the divine way of life. They are gifted *jivas*— they bring with themselves gifts divine. These they express on the plane of *maya*. They manifest the glory of the divine life.

They who have the *daivi sampad* (the divine heritage) and whose feet are set on the path which leads to liberation, have the following twenty-six marks —

(1) Fearlessness. Most of us live in a world of fear, worry, anxiety, for most of us do not love God. He who has love in his heart for God is unafraid. He who has made of his work an offering to God and is absorbed in love of the divine life has got

rid of all fear

(2) Purity of the heart. Purity of the heart is freedom from all duplicity. It is singleness of the soul. This purity is achieved through overcoming the storms of life. When the storms are faced with fearlessness and overcome, the man is born anew and becomes a little child. So Goethe says .— “Keep thyself pure, esteem thyself little.”

To grow in purity, meditate on the words — “The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”

The pure heart abandons the world and admits nothing but God. The pure heart asks nothing, but leaves itself in the divine Arms, and wastes no time in any desire, but ever wills what God wills of it.

(3) Steadfastness in knowledge and yoga. It is perseverance in the Path of Wisdom, the Path of Truth. This steadfastness is not an intellectual or philosophical pursuit, but calls for *abhyasa*, application in daily life,— calls for moral and spiritual discipline.

A steadfast quest for Truth is necessary. And this quest is through (1) daily meditation; (2) devotional practices; (3) love to all, and (4) unselfish service of children, the aged and the sick. In the quest of Truth there are difficulties: the true man overcomes them by persevering in the path. Sometimes, indeed, the whispering doubt arises — “The goal is unattainable!” The true man does not listen to the whispers of doubt. He moves on! He continues to tread the path! And, one day, he attains! He is not hasty, nor rash. He perseveres, knowing that noble things appear at first to be unfathomable!

(4) Almsgiving (*dana*). The law of giving was declared by Jesus, when he said — “Freely ye have received, freely give!” Do we give freely? Or do we keep back? And giving (*dana*) is measured not by its quantity, but by its quality. It is the spirit of our giving that matters. *Dana* is of the heart, not of hands. The man who truly gives does not proclaim. A smile given to a brother or sister in need is *dana*. Water given to a thirsty traveller is *dana*. Removing a stone thrown on the road is *dana*. The three steps to Heaven, in Islamic teaching are *dana*, fast and prayer. When Bernard desired to join St. Francis in his work, the Saint

, said — “First go and sell what you have and give to the poor ”

(5) Self-control, control of the senses, mastery over appetites and passions

Horses are tamed The senses (*indriyas*) are horses they must be tamed How? Make Him your Charioteer!

The body is meant to be a *karma-kshetra* Most of us, alas! have made it a *bhoga-kshetra* Rule your *trishna*, appetite, restrain your passions and desires,— and you become the Master of Alexander!

The essence of the wisdom of Socrates is in the words — “Know thyself” The essence of the wisdom of the Hindu *yogis* in ancient India was — “Conquer thyself” Pythagoras, who shaped his life and teaching on the model of a Hindu *yogi*, said — “No man is free who cannot command himself ” Self-conquest is the true freedom

(6) Sacrifice (*yagna*) This is of various kinds The offering of *yagna* is based on the thought that the gods, men and sub-human creatures form the symphony of life The *yagnas* reveal the joy of being self-sacrificing, of giving a helping hand to those who, as guests, need your succour and help The *yagnas* teach you to be humble as you give offerings to the gods The *yagnas* teach you that you have a duty to the dear, departed ones, that you should, from time to time, lift your eyes from the earth to the realm where rest your ancestors, asking for your help and service The *yagnas*, also, teach you the duty of worshipping daily the Eternal and Infinite

(7) Study of the scriptures (*svadhya*) This includes chanting of the Divine Names and glories

(8) Austerity (*tapas*), enduring hardships in the pursuit of a holy life This austerity is (1) practice of truth-speaking, (2) truth loving, and (3) avoiding of luxury

(9) Uprightness, straightforwardness (*arjavam*) The men of divine qualities are straightforward in acts of daily life they are upright in their dealings

(10) They practise harmlessness (*ahimsa*), in a world where so many men are not men but wolves They abstain from all violence

(11) They practise truth (*satyam*) in daily life. They represent things as they have known or understood them. "Consider not him a pariah who is born in a family of outcastes. He who breaks his word is an outcaste," says a Hindu proverb. "Truth shall make you free," says Jesus.

Truth and love,— these two interpret to me the meaning of God.

(12) They have absence of anger or wrath (*akrodha*). They never get angry even with those who harm them,— or even when provoked.

(13) They are men of renunciation (*tyaga*), detachment. This renunciation is (a) of the idea of doership in action, (b) of vanity, egoism, conceit, avarice and lust, and (c) of objects of worldly enjoyment.

(14) They have peacefulness or tranquillity (*shanti*), their minds being at rest.

(15) They have aversion to fault-finding or slander. They do not speak ill of others.

(16) They have compassion (*daya*) for all living beings.

(17) They are free from covetousness. They have no greed. They have no "thirst of riches." "Men," says the *Hitopadesha*, "are insatiable." With a river of gold, they still think they are poor! He by whom flamingoes, green parrots and peacocks are brilliantly attired,— He hath made provision for thee, also! Why, then, be greedy? Be content!

Freidoun was not satisfied with a kingdom. Alexander wept when he came to the end of his conquests. But an infant is happy with the sand which fills his little hand, and I know not if the infant regards silver as more precious than sand. The infant has no greed!

Work is good. work is necessary. work is an integral part of our life. But useless activity must be avoided. Our appointed battle of life we must not quit, but let us not be greedy of work. An humble task, if it is my duty,— well done,— will help me and my society better than a grand task which I do not know how to accomplish and which will only stir up ambition and strife. Cooking and scrubbing can train me for my spiritual Home. In

little and lowly acts does the divine man take joy

(18) Gentleness, tenderness of heart, mild bearing The divine man is patient As the earth bears with those who dig it, so does he bear with those who revile him He is gentle, because he knows that they who revile him do not know,— are ignorant As the *Kural* says — “To bear with the ignorant is might of might”

(19) They have modesty,— feeling ashamed of doing anything wrong, feeling God’s Presence everywhere

(20) They are not fickle They are men of constancy They are steady and so do not indulge in idle thought or idle talk They abstain from useless activity

(21) They have *tejas*, vigour, ardour, energy. They acquire a lustre of countenance Krishna and Buddha had radiant faces

Tejas includes “sense of honour” Socrates declined to run away from his prison-cell he was a man of honour He showed the nobility of a man of honour, when he quietly drank the cup of hemlock

(22) They are men of forgiveness, not revenge,— asking the Lord to forgive even them that do them harm Mahomed forgave his enemies Rishi Dayanand forgave his cook, Jagannath, who poisoned him

(23) They have *dhruti*, fortitude they do not lose patience

(24) They have *shaucham*, purity They are always clean in body Is not cleanliness next to godliness? Today, the cry is for beauty of colour and pigment,— not cleanliness

(25) They are free from envy or malice They have no hate in their hearts, no ill-will against any They have thankfulness and gratitude for the least good done to them Far from malice, they give service to others and, in serving them, become one with them

Kaṭkeyī was infected with envy and she sent Rama into exile

(26) They have no pride or conceit They do not hold themselves as superior to anyone Pride or *ahankara* is, indeed, the last to go!

These 26 constitute the *dāru sampad*, the wealth of the divine man the divine treasure of life

Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, almsgiving, self-control, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness,

Harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, aversion to fault-finding, compassion to living beings, freedom from covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness,

Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of envy, freedom from excessive pride,— these, O Arjuna, belong to him who is born with the divine heritage [XVI 1-3]

[2]

Who are the men of demoniac nature? They are called *asuras*. In an Upanishad we read — By the breath, the upward breath of his mouth, Prajapati created the gods (*suras*) and by the downward breathing he created the *asuras*. “Having created them, there was, as it were, darkness for him.” This darkness represents evil and ignorance. The “down breath” was the breath of desires. Desires are undivine. Desires are vibrations from below. The desire-mind is the adversary of the divine spirit within. The desire-mind is the “demon”. There are men who are dominated and ruthlessly drawn by the desire-mind. Such men are *asura*-men. They are on the path of bondage.

They are (1) hypocrites they practise dissimulation and assume false appearances (2) They are arrogant and conceited, intoxicated with power (3) They are men of wrath (4) They have rudeness and harshness (5) They are men of ignorance and unwisdom

Hypocrisy, arrogance and conceit, wrath, as also, rudeness and ignorance,— these, O Arjuna, belong to him who is born with the demoniac nature [XVI 4]

They who have the *asuri sampad* (demoniac estate) and are on the path of bondage have the following marks —

(1) Lack of discrimination. They cannot discriminate between right activity (what should be done) and right abstinence (what should be avoided)

(2) Lack of purity. They are unclean in body and mind

(3) Lack of propriety Their conduct is reproachable They recognise no rule of life

(4) Lack of truth Truth is not in them they are given to lying

(5) Atheism They arrogantly assert that the universe is without a moral basis, has no basic laws, is without a Ruler (God) and without a guiding and synthesising Principle,— a mass of blind chance and blind competition,— that the universe is a house of lust, conceived in lust, that all creatures have sprung from the union of the sexes (male and female principles)

(6) Dark-mindedness They are lost souls and have small understanding Their intellects are dull

(7) They give themselves to evil deeds, cruel acts They work for the destruction of the world they are the enemies of mankind

(8) They say the world is for enjoyment only and so they surrender themselves to insatiable desires They live for nothing but desire and all that ministers to it

(9) They practise dissimulation and assume false appearances in order to make a favourable impression on others They are hypocrites

(10) They are puffed up with pride

(11) In blindness they cling to wrong ideas,— like Ravana who thought there was no harm in stealing Sita

(12) They are tormented by endless worries which do not leave them till death

(13) To them there is nothing higher than pleasure Pleasure is their *summum bonum*, the highest good, “Eat, drink, and be merry”, is the motto of their life

(14) They are caught into the sinful, lustful course They indulge in immoral practices

(15) They are men of wrath, anger

(16) They amass wealth by unjust means for indulging in luxuries and sense-enjoyments

(17) Their egoism is awful On their thoughts and their acts is the sting of “I” They regard themselves as supreme “Is not our

The doors of darkness are three They are the three gates of hell — (1) lust, (2) anger or wrath, and (3) greed or avarice

Triple is the gateway of this hell, destructive of the self,— lust, wrath and greed Therefore, let men shun these three

[XVI. 21]

Lust (*kama*) is the desire for blind satisfaction of the senses Anger or wrath or hate (*krodha*) is the desire to oppose those who stand in the way of the satisfaction of those desires Greed or covetousness (*lobha*) is the desire for inordinate accumulation of worldly goods

The body is meant to be an instrument for the fulfilment of man's spiritual destiny But if the body becomes the master, imposing its selfish demands on men, and so if sense-enjoyment becomes life's end, it is the beginning of the fall

The world is meant to be an expression of divine glories,— the service and love But if the resources of the world, power and wealth, fail to serve and ennoble human life, and are accumulated and used for selfish purposes,— for increase of your personal power and exploitation of others,— then you may be sure you are on the downward path You are descending into hell

And when you are on the path of lust or greed, be sure you will be opposed by some, for you are on the wrong road you are going against the Law Eternal And, when opposed, you burst into wrath, you hate or brutally attack them that oppose you, you may be sure you are bound fast in bondage you have advanced far into hell

To win release from the gates of darkness, the gates of hell, man must turn away from the promptings of desire and turn to the holy law (*shastra-vidhi*) The holy law of the *shastras* (scriptures) shows what is right and what is wrong So, Arjuna, let your mind be illumined by the light of the *shastras* and, knowing the *shastra-vidhi*,— the accumulated wisdom of the ages,— go forth to do thy earthly task

He, who having cast aside the holy law (*shastra-vidhi*, the scriptural law), followeth the impulsion of desire,— he

attaineth not to perfection, nor true happiness, nor the highest goal

Therefore, let the holy law be thy rule in determining what should be done or what should not be done. Knowing what hath been declared by the holy law, do thou, O Arjuna, thy work in this world [XVI 23, 24]

future famous, brave and great?" they exclaim "Rich are we, proudly born What other men live like us?" So they pile up wealth, more and more, and, killing some, gloat over the feat, and expect to kill other enemies "Look!" they say, "are we not lords?"

And they perform ostentatiously the sacrifices which are so only in name and with disregard to *shastric* rules they are lip-sacrifices for ostentation

(18) Their mind is always wandering here and there

(19) They are enmeshed in the web of delusion

(20) They hate the Lord dwelling in their hearts and in the hearts of all

Such men of demoniac nature wander in the wheel of birth and death, and are cast down into the wombs of degraded parents And they tread the nether road, sinking lower and lower in the scale of evolution, sinking into perdition, their souls ruined, lost

The demoniac know not about the way of action or the way of abstinence They have neither purity, nor good conduct, nor truth

They say that the world has no truth, no (moral) basis, no God, brought about by mutual union, a product of lust and nothing else

Firm in this belief, these lost souls of dull understanding and cruel deeds, come forth as the enemies of the world for its destruction

Surrendering themselves to insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, conceit and arrogance, clinging to wrong ideas through delusion, they act with impure resolves

Beset with innumerable cares which last until death, regarding gratification of desires as their highest aim, feeling sure that this is all,

Ensnared by a hundred idle hopes, slaves to lust and anger, they buy wealth with base deeds to glut hot appetites and indulge in sensual enjoyments

"This I have gained today, that desire shall I attain This wealth is mine, that also shall be mine

"This foe have I slain, others, too, shall I slay I am the Lord (of all), I enjoy myself, I am prosperous, mighty and happy

"I am rich and high-born, who is there like unto me? I shall perform sacrifices, I shall give (alms), I shall make merry " Thus (they say), deluded by ignorance

Bewildered by many thoughts, enmeshed in the web of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desires, they sink into a foul hell

Self-conceited, stubborn, drunk with the pride of their wealth, they perform sacrifices for outward show, disregarding scriptural rules

Vowed to egoism, insolence and power, and to lust and anger, these wicked people hate Me who doth dwell in their bodies and (in those of) others

Those who thus hate Me, who are cruel, the worst of mankind, these evil-doers I hurl constantly into the wombs of demons

Fallen into the wombs of demons, they spend life after life, enveloped in delusion They come not to Me, O Arjuna, but sink into the lowest state [XVI 7-20]

Yet even they are not lost They are purified by suffering They are restored to re-formation Not even to them is denied *mukti* (liberation) It cometh to them, it may be, after long periods of evolution For in them, too, is the Indwelling Krishna (*Adhyatman*) He never ceases to make His Presence known within them and, again and again, do they experience remorse and are conscience-stricken They, too, are given the power to dominate matter or the flesh, to conquer the three qualities, their organs and senses, to win victory over the lower self, and to make Krishna the Charioteer of the car of their life They, too, are, one day, released from bondage they, too, enter into the Abode of Krishna

Let not the godly men despise the *asura*-men "There is none good but God," said Jesus God alone is good and pure The greatest of the godly man, if from him the Presence of God be withdrawn, becomes no better than a cold leper the worst of *asura*-men, if God's mercy looks upon him, becomes new, a radiant child of the Lord

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[XVI 23, 24]

CHAPTER 17

Three Kinds Of Faith

[1]

Is it necessary to know the holy laws of which the *shastras* (scriptures) speak?

The laws work, whether you *know* them or not. The laws include love, compassion, truth. They take you, step by step, to realisation,— whether you know them or not. Only be true to yourself. You may not *know* the *shastras*— you must *act* in obedience to the laws.

Arjuna is afraid of the fate of the man who is ignorant of the laws, yet leads his life well, offering worship with *shraddha* (faith). And Arjuna asks the Master —

Those who, neglecting the holy law (the scriptural law), offer sacrifices filled with faith — what is their condition, O Krishna? Is it one of *sattva* or *rajas* or *tamas*? [XVII 1]

Arjuna must not be afraid of the fate of such a man. That man obeys the laws, without knowing it. What matters is obedience to the laws, in action,— not a *shastric* knowledge of them. That man is true to himself in daily life, and it is well with him.

Shraddha or faith is the man. Even as is the character of his

shraddha or faith, so is he Faith represents the man Faith of one kind or another is the very principle of action

And faith or *shraddha* of mortals is of three kinds,— *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* According to man's nature is his faith *Shraddha* is born of the nature of man and a man is, as his faith is He is what he believes and revere A man's faith marks his character

The faith of mortals, born of their nature, is of three kinds,— *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* Hear thou of these

According to man's nature is his faith, O Arjuna! Man is fashioned by his faith as his faith is, so he is [XVII 2, 3]

Sattvic shraddha is the faith of purity It is the faith of those who worship God or the gods Pure men, men of purity and knowledge, worship God or the gods and go to the gods after death they ultimately attain to wisdom or *nirvana*

Rajasic shraddha is the faith of energy It is the faith of men of energy, of passion and desire, of them who want power, wealth, success They worship *yakshas* (demi-gods, gods of wealth) and *rakshasas* (demons)

Tamasic shraddha is the faith of darkness It is the faith of the dull, ignorant, selfish, impure, sensual, dark folk They worship ghosts and wandering spirits of the dead or nature spirits (*pretas* and *bhutas*,— evil forces)

Men of purity worship the gods, men of passion worship *yakshas* and *rakshasas*, and others,— men of darkness,— worship ghosts and wandering spirits [XVII 4]

[2]

Worship reflects faith or *shraddha* And if a man offers worship unsanctioned by the *shastras* (scriptures), he follows a demoniac discipline and goes astray Thus there be men whose worship takes the form of dreadful self-mortification it is a worship which tortures the body (Krishna's temple) Such a worship is full of desire and passions And if the man thinks he knows his duty better than the *shastras*, his worship is "egoistic" It is filled with self-conceit

The men who practise dreadful austerities, not sanctioned

by the scriptures, who are given to hypocrisy and egoism and are carried away by the force of desire and passion,

Such men are witless They torment the group of elements in their body and Me who dwells in the body Know these to be demoniac in their resolves [XVII 5, 6]

[3]

The food a man takes corresponds to his character which is made by faith And as faith is of three kinds, so is food

(1) *Sattvic* food is of *sattvic* men or men of purity *Sattvic* food promotes integrity, intelligence, intellectual brightness, strength, vigour, health, pleasure of physical and mental life, cheerfulness, delight, joy of living *Sattvic* foods are palatable, savoury, sweet, juicy, nourishing and agreeable They are foods such as wheat, rice, green beans, dairy products (butter, etc) fruits, vegetables, etc

(2) *Rajasic* food is that of passionate men,— men of energy, worldly-minded, fighting men These foods are bitter, sour, salted, over-hot, pungent, dry and biting e g opium, tobacco, tamarind, chillies, parched grain, rye, etc They produce pain, grief and sickness

(3) *Tamasic* food is dear to “dark” men, the evil-minded ones They seek foods which are not freshly cooked, which are putrid, tasteless, stale, unclean, corrupt, foul, kept overnight They are foods such as meat, fish, onions, eggs, flesh, pickles, liquor, remains of food eaten by others

The foods which prolong life and promote purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are sweet, soft, nourishing and agreeable, are liked by *sattvic* men

The foods that are bitter, sour, salted, over-hot, pungent, dry and burning, and which produce pain, grief and disease are liked by the *rajasic* men

That which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten, unclean, is the food liked by the *tamasic* men [XVII 8-10]

You must eat *sattvic* food, for it purifies the heart Pure or *sattvic* food is the product of honest work If you eat food purchased with ill-gotten money or received as a gift from a person who is not honest, you are not eating *sattvic* food Man is

what he eats,— says a German proverb Mind is a product of the food you eat So be careful Eat food cooked by one whose magnetism is pure The right persons to feed you are mother, wife, daughter, sister, guru And mentally offer your food as an *ahuti* to the Lord then your food will give you strength for work and service And when you are eating, see that the atmosphere around you is peaceful Don't eat in the midst of noises

[4]

The sacrifice, too, corresponds to the man's character So there are three kinds of sacrifices

(1) *Sattvic* sacrifice is offered as a duty, trusting in God and the holy law, and with no desire for reward or fruit or selfish gain This sacrifice is offered because it is in accord with the law, not with a view of profit

(2) *Rajasic* sacrifice is insincere being offered for the sake of displaying wealth and power and earning fame It is offered with a view to fruit

(3) *Tamasic* sacrifice is devoid of faith, is contrary to scriptural laws

Sacrifice is *sattvic* (pure), when it is offered in accordance to the holy law, by men who have no desire for reward, and who believe firmly that sacrifice is a duty

Sacrifice which is offered with a view to fruit or for the sake of display, know that sacrifice to be *rajasic* (passionate), O Arjuna!

Sacrifice which is not in conformity with the holy law, in which no food is distributed, no *mantras* are recited and no gifts are offered, which is empty of faith, is said to be *tamasic* (dark)

[XVII 11-13]

[5]

Austerity or penance (*tapas*), too, reveals the man's character and is of three kinds *Tapas* is of body or speech or mind

Tapas of body this includes reverent prostration to gods and great ones, true Brahmins, teachers and the wise

This *tapas* is revealed, also, in such qualities as purity or

cleanliness of body, straight-forwardness, harmlessness and continence. Continence is *brahmacharya*. The body must be freed from the lusts of the flesh. Therefore, the body should be treated with hardness. Mortify the senses, strip them of what tempts them to go astray. Keep them away from luxury, concupiscence, unruly desires. The body should be chastised and trained to obey the divine law.

Tapas of speech: this demands observance of truthfulness, kind and helpful words, freedom from spitefulness or argumentativeness, and *svadhyaya* i.e. recitation of God's Name and sacred books.

Tapas of mind: this includes (1) keeping the mind cheerful and composed, in serenity and tranquillity. (2) Gentleness or meekness. And meekness is not weakness. (3) Silence. This does not mean absolute solitude. Silence is being still, for some time, from your thoughts and desires and imaginations, and resting in the God within. Silence means taking off, for the time being, the strain and stress from your soul. (4) Control of mind, and (5) Purity of feeling. Do not indulge in vain speculations and idle thoughts i.e. thoughts other than those relating to God. Keep the mind well-controlled and unsullied. As the body is cleansed by water, so the mind is purified by the thought of God.

Worship of the gods, of the twice-born, of teachers and of the wise, purity, straight-forwardness, continence and harmlessness,— this is said to be the *tapas* (austerity) of the body.

Speech that hurts no one, that is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, and the constant study of the sacred books,— this is said to be *tapas* (austerity) of speech.

Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-restraint, purity of thought (and feeling),— this is called the *tapas* (austerity) of mind. [XVII 14-16]

Sattvic tapas (austerity) is control of body, speech and mind with utmost faith and without selfishness. *Rajasic tapas* aims at honour and respect, its motive is insincere, and is ostentatious. *Tamasic tapas* is self-torture or aims at doing harm to another.

This threefold austerity is called *sattvic* (pure), when it is performed with supreme faith by men of balanced mind and

with no desire for reward

Austerity which is performed for proud display and for the sake of gaining respect, honour and worship, they call *rajasic*; it is unstable and temporary

That austerity which is self-torture or which aims at doing harm to another, and which is performed by the deluded mind, is declared to be *tamasic* [XVII 17-19]

Severe physical austerities do not help a man spiritually They do not make for his *mukti* or liberation They may lead to psychic or supernatural powers And often psychic powers are an obstacle in the way of spiritual life, for they awaken vanity Immoderate fasting or watching at night and torture of the body were never encouraged by the world's great teachers Better by far than these harsh, ascetic penances is it to bear calmly the incidents of day-to-day living,— the crosses and contradictions, the sickness and sufferings which are a portion of our earthly life

The test of true *tapas* is,— does it result in elimination of self-will, self-centred thinking, self-interest, selfish wishing and selfish imagining? True *tapas* is at the farthest end of showy acts In true *tapas* the man never thinks of “fruits”, the man is non-attached to self-interest

Interior mortification is necessary Refuse consent to the suggestions of the senses Let the will grow in strength and purity so as to overcome the flesh Resist pleasure-suggestions and incentives True *tapas* is spiritual mortification, is inward self-denial

Not outward poverty but the spirit of poverty is necessary It is the spirit of simplicity You may have abundance, but you must not desire it Or you may have anything but abundance you may be ill-nourished and ill-clothed But you must not cry for possession, you must not desire it ! So must you gradually learn to die to self

The voice of true *tapas* is — Discipline yourself until you renounce self-will, lose the ego-centric life Let God alone be reflected in your body, your words and your mind Therefore, be wholly empty When you are empty, the Lord will fill you !

[6]

Gifts (*dana*), too, are of three kinds —

(1) *Sattvic dana* is that which expects no return and takes account of place and time and fit recipient or worthy person

(2) *Rajasic dana* is that which is made with desire for a return or fruit (such as honour, applause, business-success, *svarga*) or given with a grudging heart

(3) *Tamasic dana* is that which takes no account of place or time and offers alms contemptuously or scornfully to unfit recipients

The gift which is given, from a sense of duty, to one from whom nothing in return is expected, and which is given in the right place at the right time to a deserving person,— such a gift is *sattvic* (pure)

When a gift is given with a view to receiving something in return or with expectation of a future reward, or when it is given unwillingly,— such a gift is *rajasic* (passionate)

The gift which is given at a wrong place or time or to an unworthy person, or with disrespect or contempt,— such a gift is *tamasic* (dark) [XVII 20-22]

Dana is right giving In this sense, adapting the words of Mahomed, to give water to the thirsty is *dana*, to remove stones and thorns from the wayside is *dana*, to smile in the presence of a brother who must be cheered is *dana* So digging wells and erecting drinking-fountains and making roads and planting trees which give shade to travellers is *dana* Is not *dana*, then, the true wealth of a man? As Mahomed says — “When a man dies, mortals ask what property has he left behind him?” He who gives with a glad heart in *dana*, plants a tree which sends forth branches beyond the sky!

Dana, then, in its noblest form, is the pouring of your heart's sympathy upon God's creatures,— man and bird and beast *Dana* is the gift that makes some human hearts happier, more blessed, that makes a corner of God's creation better, beautifuller

[7]

Om Tat Sat,— are three mystic syllables used in the scriptures Between them and the spiritual life of *yagna* (sacrifice), *tapas* (austerity) and *dana* (gift), there is an intimate connection

Om Tat Sat,— is the three-fold designation of Brahman “Om”

expresses the absolute supremacy of Brahman. Brahman is Supreme — no speech may express Brahman. "Before the One, words recoil," says Shankara quoting from the Scripture. "Man can but apprehend, he cannot *comprehend* God!" The Supreme is infinitely incomprehensible. Every root-race has its sacred word. The word of the Aryan Race is "Om". Listen for it,— in the rustling wind and the roaring sea, in the murmur of the stream and the twinkling of the star, in the song of the birds and the clap of the thunder-storm, in the song of the *bhakta* and the ringing of the temple-bells. They all proclaim — "Brahman is the Supreme." It is the Song of Creation. Chant it once, twice, thrice,— chant it seven times, if you are prepared for it. Chant "Om" and grow in the "practice of the presence of God." Chant "Om" in the measure in which your body is pure, your daily living is righteous, your aspiration is unselfish service, and your effort is meditation on Krishna!

"Tat" expresses the universality of Brahman. The Supreme is the Universal. The essence of Brahman, says Shankara, is Pure consciousness. "Tat" is Universal Consciousness. "Meditate upon this Truth," says the Teacher, "within your consciousness." This meditation makes for Liberation.

"Sat" expresses the Truth and Goodness of Brahman. Brahman is the Good. At the heart of things is a Divine Serenity, a Good Will, the Good! God is *That*.

"Sat", also, means what is auspicious, productive of good results. All actions dedicated to Brahman, in which the ego is annihilated, are "Sat". All actions not dedicated to Brahman are *asat*, unreal.

"Om Tat Sat",— this is considered to be the three-fold designation of Brahman. By this were ordained of old the Brahmins, the Vedas and the sacrifices.

Therefore, all acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity, enjoined in the scriptures, are always begun with the utterance of "Om" by the men who know Brahman.

Those who seek liberation, being their acts of sacrifice, austerity and gift with the utterance of "Tat" ("That") without thought of reward.

The word "Sat" is used in the sense of reality and goodness.

Likewise, O Arjuna, the word "Sat" is used for praiseworthy action

Steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and gift is also, called "Sat", and so also action consecrated to That is called "Sat"

Whatsoever is done without faith, whether it be offering (in sacrifice), gift or austerity, or anything else, is called *asat*, O Arjuna! Such work is of no value hereafter or here

[XVII 23-28]

"Om Tat Sat" is Gita's *mantra* its repetition is a sacramental act it opens the door of grace Christians and Buddhists, Muslims and Jews have also sacred words and formulas,— hallowed phrases,— which may become channels of spiritual power or *shakti* Such words or verses or phrases guard us against bad influences or dark forces Such words or phrases influence the subconscious mind "Sat Nam", "God", "Love", "Krishna", "Christ", "Hare Ram", "Hari Bol", "Haq Maujud", "Rahman", "Rahim", are words which, if repeated understandingly and devotionally, purify thoughts and feelings and induce selfless concentration of will "The doors of the letters of the word," the Sufi says, "are opened and the soul passes into Reality" A repetition of these *mantras* awakes an integral intuition

All sacrifices proceed from this one source,— Om Tat Sat Begin all work with a repetition of Om, i e with prayer and invocation of God No rite is valid unless it follows the *vidhi*, the law of the *shastras* (scriptures), and is referred over with faith to Om Tat Sat,— the Author of both the *shastra* and the *yagna* With the utterance of "Om", begin all *yagna*, *tapas* and *dana*

Whatever is wrought,— *yagna* or *tapas* or *dana*,— without the thought and utterance of this Name, "Om Tat Sat", without faith in God and the Law,— is *asat*, having neither reality nor goodness Such work is of no value in this world and has no fruit of happiness hereafter No action devoid of faith can be really beneficial It serves no useful purpose, here or hereafter Whatever you do, do it with faith in the Law of God

CHAPTER 18

The Final Word

[1]

In the XVIII chapter (*adhyaya*) of the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna that true liberation is achieved through (1) courage and (2) selfless service. True *sanyasa* is inner renunciation of selfish desires. Pour your strength (*shakti*) as an offering, a sacrifice (*yagna*) on the altar of the universe. Renounce,— not all actions,— but all “desire-prompted” actions, if you aspire to the Highest.

The true *sanyasin* does not discard *all* action, but only selfish action. The true *sanyasin*, indeed, is a selfless server of humanity. He becomes what the Buddhist books call a “Bodhisatva”, who forswears even the beautitude of “*Nirvana*”, and whose prayer to the Lord of the world is — “Not for me, O Lord, is the heaven-world, if there be even one heart, one mind in sorrow forlorn. Take me into *Nirvana* only after every little one, every lost one, every entangled one, is saved. Till such a time let me be left behind on this plane of suffering and pain, in service and sacrifice.”

The true *sanyasin* rises above all separateness,— racial, political, economic, social, cultural, religious. Purified of all

notice a marvellous change in you Your purified senses, your disciplined mind, then, may contact objects, undisturbed then all objects cool ! Then the light shines no smoke then, but illumination ! The man of true *tyaga* moves in the world, desireless, passionless, a centre of inspiration and illumination to those who come within his radius of influence

[2]

Renunciation of obligatory works and daily duties (actions prescribed as duties in the scriptures) is improper *Dana*, *tapas* and *yagna* are prescribed duties they are not a source of bondage, for they purify They must not be renounced Such renunciation springs from *moha* (delusion)

Tyaga is threefold,— *tamasic*, *rajasic* and *sattvic* True *tyaga* is *sattvic* it is *tyaga* of attachment and fruit In *tamasic tyaga*, the man is dominated by *moha*, delusion, ignorance, attachment *Tamasic tyaga* is of the dark type Thus, Antony renounced his career in Rome on account of his *moha* for Cleopatra A man had a good job he left it to be with a woman in another town he had *moha* for the woman

Verily, renunciation of actions which are ordained is not right Such renunciation through ignorance is declared to be *tamasic* (dark) [XVIII 7]

Rajasic tyaga does not lead to liberation (*mukti*), for in this *tyaga* you give up to avoid pain or trouble or strain

He who abstaineth from an action as troublesome, or from fear of physical suffering, does *rajasic tyaga* And he obtaineth not any benefit from such *tyaga* (relinquishment) [XVIII 8]

True *tyaga* is *sattvic* it is *tyaga* of attachment and fruit In true *tyaga* you take up what duty bids you do You perform actions prescribed by the scriptures, but unmoved by gain you act impersonally You do an act, because it is due You do duties for duty's sake you renounce all egotism and all attachment and all fruits

He who performs a prescribed action, O Arjuna, because it ought to be done, giving up attachment and also the fruit,—

that *tyaga* is regarded as *sattvic* (pure)

[XVIII 9]

The *sattvic tyagi* (renouncer) hates no humble or unpleasant tasks, nor is he attached to agreeable, pleasant, lofty tasks. He hath cut asunder all doubts. He feels towards his work no emotion of repulsion and none of attachment. He does his task as a duty. Is the duty unpleasant? He does not hate it. Is the duty pleasant? He is not attached to it. He accepts life ungrudgingly. So is the teaching re-affirmed — “Arjuna! play your part faithfully and courageously. Neither grieve nor glory! Submit to the Will of God! For His Will alone is fulfilled, not yours!”

The wise man who is pervaded by *sattva* (purity), whose doubts are cut asunder,— such a renouncer neither hateth unpleasant action nor is attached to agreeable action.

[XVIII 10]

The *sattvic tyagi* is the true *tyagi*; he is a true *sanyasin*, too. He accepts the unpleasant and the pleasant as ordained by the Will of God.

He does not worry about the fruit of action. He does his duty, disregarding fruit, knowing that duty, well discharged, paves the way for liberation and illumination. He does his duty, setting the Law, the Wheel in motion. Arjuna! do your duty and the Law will operate. Leave the results to God's Wisdom,— i.e. the Law. Trust in God and the Law.

True *tyaga* is not non-doing of action, but non-attachment to fruits. The true *tyagi* is he who gives up fruit, not work. He who has no desire for fruit, he is *akarta*. He is like the tree on the river-side: its fruit goes to him who wants it. The renouncer does not go into the wheel of birth and death.

[3]

Sri Krishna indicates the five causes or causative conditions of action —

The first is *adhiṣṭhanam*, the seat, the place, the dwelling home of the *jiva* or desires, the physical body.

The second is *karta*, agent. Who is he? The *jiva*, personality, the empirical ego. Associating with *prakṛti* (matter), the *jiva*

doubt, eliminating the "I", the "ego", beholding in all the One Eternal Spirit, he pours his life in the service of the Universe In the Limitless he lives and working in time, he abides in the Eternal

In the very opening *sloka* of the XVIII chapter, Arjuna puts the questions — "What is the difference between *sanyasa* and *tyaga*?" And Sri Krishna proceeds to explain to Arjuna that *sanyasa* is renunciation of *kamyā karma* i.e. deeds stained by selfish desire But there are actions, such as eating, sleeping, etc., which the *sanyasin* does not, cannot renounce Non-action, inertia, is *not* the ideal of the true *sanyasin*

And what is *tyaga*? *Tyaga* renounces all results,— the fruits of all actions The *tyagi* does daily duties and does action aimed at helping society, but he does them in a spirit of dedication The *tyagi*'s are dedicated acts So the *tyagi* does not renounce the three *paramarthik* acts — *yagna* (sacrifice), *dana* (almsgiving) and *tapas* (austerity) He does acts which are for self-discipline or for social help Such acts are not a bondage, but lead to liberation Renunciation does not mean physical renunciation or forced withdrawal from the world and its activities Renunciation is giving up selfish activities and coveting no fruits of other activities but converting them as offerings to God!

The sages understand by renunciation (*sanyasa*) giving up of desire-prompted works, the giving up of the fruits of all actions is called relinquishment (*tyaga*) by the wise

[XVIII 2]

Some philosophers, like the followers of Kapila (called Sankhyas), condemn all action, saying that action as such is impure, is stained with some measure of evil (*dosha*) and causes bondage and that, therefore, all action must be given up But some others, called the Mīmāṃsakas, hold that there are acts such as sacrifice (*yagna*), austerity (*tapas*), and benevolent deeds (*dana*) these should not be given up, for they purify the heart and they help on one's spiritual evolution

"Action should be given up as an evil", say some thoughtful men "Acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be given up", say others

[XVIII 3]

What the Gita urges is that you must give up attachment to

fruits of all actions Practise virtue for the sake of virtue He truly acts who acts without any thought of the fruits of action

Hear now, O Arjuna, My conclusion as to relinquishment
Relinquishment is declared to be three-fold

Deeds of sacrifice, almsgiving and austerity should not be given up, but should be performed For sacrifice, almsgiving and austerity are purifiers of the wise [XVIII 4, 5]

Yagna or worship or sacrifice is duty to God *dana* or alms or deeds of gifts are duties to the teachers and to society *tapas* or penance or austerity is a duty to oneself To renounce any one of these three duties would never be a spiritual act, Perform these three, in a *sattvic* way, with true *tyaga*, and you will purify your heart

Even such acts of gifts and penance and *yagna* must be impersonally done, all gain renounced, all attachment eliminated

But even these actions should be done, leaving aside attachment and fruit. This, O Arjuna, is My decided and final view [XVIII 6]

Actions should not be renounced, but they should be dedicated to God and *lokasangraha* (welfare of humanity)

What is essential is to renounce all thought of desire, all thought of self, "I". If you will not renounce, *kama* (desire) will awake it is inherent in the mind and the senses

How to get rid of *kama* or desire? There is the Freudian school It says -- Make friends with desire gratify the senses No, we see that desire flares up by gratification gratification is to the senses what *ghee* (clarified butter) is to fire Then, there is the ascetic school It says — Suppress desire. No, suppression becomes expression

The right way to get rid of *kama* or desire is *abhyasa*, is meditation, is constant dwelling on the idea that the way of the senses is anything but the way of peace Gratification means grief Gradually, pacify the mind through the power of understanding Gradually, let the mind understand that neither ascetic suppression nor Freudian gratification conquers passion Develop the perceptive power of understanding . then you will

notice a marvellous change in you Your purified senses, your disciplined mind, then, may contact objects, undisturbed then all objects cool ! Then the light shines no smoke then, but illumination ! The man of true *tyaga* moves in the world, desireless, passionless, a centre of inspiration and illumination to those who come within his radius of influence

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The second is *karta*, agent. Who is he? The *jiva*, personality, the empirical ego. Associating with *prakriti* (matter), the *jiva*

forgets its original Form, the *atma-svarupa*, and becoming egoistic, says — “I am the doer ” This egoism must be given up, if freedom or liberation is to be achieved

The third is *karanam* or instruments or organs They are the ten *indriyas* (senses), and *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahankara*

The fourth is *chesta*, efforts, functions of *prana* or vital energies or breaths in the body

The fifth is *davam*, providence, destiny, the non-human realm that influences human effort and results *Daivam* is the world-will at work,— the regulator of all work

These, then, are the five “instrumental” causes of every act, good or bad

Learn of Me, O Arjuna, these five causes, for the accomplishment of all action, as declared in the Sankhya doctrine

The seat of action (the body), the agent, the various organs, the diverse kinds of efforts, and providence, being the fifth

Whatever action a man undertakes by his body, speech and mind, whether right or wrong,— these five are the cause thereof

That being so, the man of perverse mind who, on account of his untrained understanding, looks upon himself as the sole agent (or actor),— verily he seeth not! [XVIII 13-16]

He who thinks his own self is the only agent of all his actions,— he is egoistic, he is ignorant and too blind to see the truth He fails to see

He who is not egoistic may slay, yet he kills not . for he is unfettered by selfish thought

Arjuna may kill the Kurus, but if he is untainted by ego, he does not slay them though he slay these thousands, he is no slayer

He who is free from the egoistic notion, whose *buddhi* (understanding) is not sullied, though he slay these people, he slayeth not, nor is bound (by his actions) [XVIII 17]

He, who is above the thought, “I am the agent,” who has realised that the *Atman*, the Self, transcends the mind, and whose understanding is untainted by the desire for the fruition

of actions, he cannot be blamed nor praised for any action

Does intention, then, alone determine the morality of an actor? Does the spirit alone count in our estimate of the ethics of work? The Gita points out that these two are essential to right action — (1) freedom from egoism, and (2) unstained understanding

[4]

An action has 2 causes — (1) subjective and (2) objective

The subjective refers to the stimuli to action, i.e. the impetus before the action is done, the subtle conception that exists in the mind „first which is, afterwards, translated into physical transformations This is called *Karmachodana* It consists of (1) knowledge, (2) the thing known, and (3) the knower

The objective refers to *karmasangraha* When an action is performed, it has its three concomitant factors — (1) *karana*, i.e. instruments or the senses, (2) subject of action, i.e. *karta*, the agent, and (3) object of action, *karma* itself, the end, the purpose aimed at

Karmachodana is mental planning and *karmasangraha* is the actual execution

Knowledge, the object of knowledge (the thing known), the knowing subject (the knower), are the threefold stimulus to action The instrument, the action, and the agent are threefold assemblage of action [XVIII 18]

[5]

Pure (*sattvic*) knowledge is perception of the One Essence in all This One is — (1) *avyayam*, imperishable, deathless, and (2) *avibhaktam*, entire, inseparable

The One in the rich and the poor, the One in the good and the criminal, in the saint and the sinner; the One in all *jivas* The *jiva* is immortal, though residing, for sometime, in the mortal coil, and the *jivas* have their differences, yet all are identical in their essential, spiritual nature This knowledge is true knowledge,— is *sattvic*

Knowledge, action and the actor are declared, in the science

of the *gunas* (Sankhya philosophy), to be of three kinds only, according to difference in *gunas* (qualities)- Hear thou duly of these also

The knowledge by which the One Imperishable Being is seen in all beings,— inseparable in the separated,— know thou that knowledge as pure (*sattvic*) [XVIII 19, 20]

Rajasic knowledge sees the many as many It knows nothing but difference

Rajasic knowledge is knowledge of *nama* (name) and *rupa* (form), not of the Essence It is knowledge of the earthen vessel but not of the Earth out of which it is made, knowledge of the lamp but not of the Light which shineth therein, knowledge of the cloth but not of the thread

Rajasic knowledge, by differentiation, sees all creatures as separate and distinct

Rajasic knowledge sees that *jivas* in different bodies,— heavenly, human or sub-human,— are different, one from the other, sees that the *jivas* have their quantitative and qualitative differences

The knowledge which sees multiplicity of beings in many creatures, all various, each apart from his fellow,— that knowledge know thou as *rajasic* (passionate)

[XVIII 21]

Tamasic knowledge is false, baseless It sees a single, small object as though it were the whole A man clings to a form or a woman in *moha* (attachment), as though it were God, a man thinks that his family is the whole world, a man is attached to his village or his country as the world, such a man has *tamasic* knowledge

While that knowledge which clings to one single effect (or small object) as if it were the whole, without looking at the cause, without grasping the Real (*tatva*), and narrow,— that is declared to be *tamasic* knowledge [XVIII 22]

The man who is attached to eating and other gross physical enjoyments, regarding them as the be-all and end-all of life, has *tamasic* knowledge

Such knowledge is false, irrational, worthless, baseless

Knowledge of the *Atman* is *sattvic*; knowledge of *nyaya* or logic, concerned with differences and distinctions, is *rajasic*; knowledge which is secular and deals with matters physical and mental and is not made an offering to the Lord, is *tamasic*

[6]

Sattvic action,— pure, right,— is action which is (1) obligatory (such as earning livelihood or when a mother looks after her child) or enjoined by sages or scriptures (such as *yagna*, *tapas*, *dana*),

(2) devoid of attachment or sense of doership, i e without egoism,

(3) done without a desire for fruit or gain, and

(4) performed passionlessly or impersonally, for duty, not for desire nor hate

An action which is obligatory, which is devoid of attachment, which is done without a desire for fruit and which is performed without love or hate (*raga* or *dvesha*),— that is called *sattvic* (pure) [XVIII 23]

Rajasic acts are vain, passionate They have the following marks —

(1) They are done in despite of nature, “against the grain”, in great strain, stress or exertion

(2) They are done under the whip of lust (*kama*) or desire (for woman, wealth, position, power, property, office)

(3) They are impelled by the will of the ego, *ahankara*, sense of self, self-conscious pride, self-conceit, egotistic vanity

But that action which is done under great strain by one who seeks to gratify his desires, and is prompted by *ahankara* (sense of self),— is declared to be *rajasic* (passionate)

[XVIII 24]

Tamasic action has the following marks —

(1) It is undertaken in the hour of delusion, of personal attachment or mental aberration, by the worldly-minded

(2) It is done without count of cost, squandering strength and treasure of fame and power, and heedless of harm to another

(3) And the man who does it does not consider his power to perform it. It is a reckless act done without regard to one's human capacity,— done even if the act tends to self annihilation.

The action which is undertaken from delusion (*moha*), without regard to consequences,— to loss and injury (to others),— and without regard to one's capacity,— that is declared to be *tamasic* (dark) [XVIII 25]

[7]

The *sattvic* doer is the man who truly acts. He is impersonal. He is without conceit. In good or evil hap, he is the same.

The true man of action whom the world awaits has the following marks —

(1) He acts without desire. He has no attachment to action or its fruits. He covets no honour, no earthly greatness.

(2) He is void of vanity. He does not boast of his doings. He does not say — “I am the doer” “I am the agent”. There is no egoism in his speech. He never says — “Without me the thing was impossible”.

(3) He is full of patience and courage. In the midst of obstacles, he remains resolute, ardent, enduring.

(4) He is *sama*, balanced in gain and loss, in pleasure and grief. Untouched by triumph, he remains in failure untroubled.

The doer who is free from attachment, whose speech is devoid of egotism, who is full of resolution and zeal, and who is unchanged by success or failure,— he is called a *sattvic karta* (pure or rightful doer). [XVIII 26]

The marks of him who is a *rajasic karta*, a doer with desire, are —

(1) He is sunk in worldly *vasanas*, attached to sense-objects.

(2) He is moved by lust of gain. He is anxious for fruits, is hot for the prize of vainglory.

(3) He is greedy.

(4) He is brutal. His nature would embarrass others, cause them pain.

(5) In triumph he is too quick to rejoice, and in failure

despairing

He who is swayed by passion, who seeks the fruit of his actions, who is greedy, harmful, impure, who is swayed by joy and sorrow,— he is pronounced a *rajasic* doer [XVIII 27]

The *tamasic* doer is erratic and uncultured in intellect His heart is not in his action He is stupid and stubborn He is a cheat, and he is malicious He is a lover of delay he ever puts off And he is easily dejected The *tamasic* agent, then, works with every evil quality

He who is unbalanced, vulgar, stubborn, deceitful, malicious, indolent, despondent, and procrastinating,— he is called a *tamasic* doer [XVIII 28]

[8]

There are three kinds of *buddhi*, understanding or insight or conscience or discernment And there are three kinds of *dhriti*, determination or steadfastness of will

The two, *buddhi* and *dhriti*, are closely connected with action *Buddhi* perceives what shall be done and *dhriti* brings the perception to its fulfilment in action *Buddhi* is discernment, the power that discriminates Solomon asked for discrimination, when he prayed — “Give me understanding!”

Hear thou, O Arjuna, related fully and severally, the threefold division, according to the three *gunas*, of *buddhi* (understanding) and *dhriti* (steadiness) [XVIII 29]

The *sattvic buddhi*, conscience or discrimination, knows when you must go forth in action and when you should withdraw or renounce action, knows acts fit or right and unfit or wrong knows what you should fear or not fear, what binds and what liberates

The *buddhi* which knows *pravritti* (right action) and *nivritti* (right cessation of action),— what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what should be feared and what should not to be feared, what work binds and what brings release,— that *buddhi*, O Arjuna, is *sattvic* (pure) [XVIII 30]

The *rajasic buddhi* is influenced by *rajas*, and so is confused in

judging right and wrong it mistakes in matters of right and duty The *sattvic buddhi* is not confused and does not make mistakes The *rajasic buddhi*, under the influence of *rajas*, sometimes confounds duty with pleasure, right with wrong The *rajasic buddhi* sees values awry, not as they are

That by which one knows awry,— erroneously,— *dharma* and *adharma* (the right and the wrong) what should be done and what should not be done,— that understanding, O Arjuna, is *rajasic* [XVIII 31]

Tamasic buddhi reverses all values, perverts all values It imagines evil to be good for conscience is, then, thickly wrapped in ignorance, in darkness, and mistakes wrong for right

Tamasic buddhi is sunk in infatuation and knows not what is righteousness and what is unrighteousness *Tamasic buddhi* takes a selfish view of moral issues and is without light, is based on darkness To a man of *tamasic buddhi*, *satsang* is wrong, and to propagate atheism is praiseworthy He regards worship of God as an old superstition To preach or spread atheism he regards as bearing witness to truth

That which is enwrapped in darkness, thinketh *adharma* (wrong) to be *dharma* (right), and seeth all things perverted,— that understanding, O Arjuna, is *tamasic*

[XVIII 32]

Determination (*dhruti*) is will-power The will that is *sattvic* or pure (1) is fixed or unwavering, (2) is strengthened by concentration of the practice of yoga, and (3) controls the activities of the mind, the life-breaths, and the senses

The *sattvic* will controls the mind-activity directed to knowledge of nature's forces By *sattvic* will is secured thought-control The *sattvic* will controls, too, our actions so that we ask for nothing in return we act in sympathetic compassion

Pure will disciplines mind, breath and the senses and takes them in the right path The mind does not wander the vibrations, *prana*, are steadied the senses are held under restraint

The determination which is unwavering, which through yoga or concentration controls the activities of the mind, the

life-breaths and the senses,— that, O Arjuna, is *sattvic* determination [XVIII 33]

Rajasic determination is in pursuit of reward It is a personal gain-greedy will It is the determination whereby a man holds to (1) virtue, duty or custom, (2) desire, and (3) wealth or property for the love of gain or personal advantage

The determination by which one, desiring the fruit, holdeth fast to *dharma* (duty), *kama* (pleasure) and *artha* (wealth),— that determination, O Arjuna, is *rajasic* (passionate) [XVIII 34]

The *tamasic* determination lingers in drowsiness and recklessness

The man of *tamasic dhruti* is in pursuit of sloth and lust and similar unworthy objects

That determination by which one, from stupidity, does not give up (excessive) sleep, fear, grief, depression and arrogance,— O Arjuna, is *tamasic* (dark) [XVIII 35]

[9]

Sattvic joy ariseth out of self-realisation or vision of the Self
Sattvic joy is attained after long experience

These, then, are the three marks of *sattvic sukha* — (1) it is attained after *abhyasa*, practice, i.e. practice of *bhajan*, *dhyana* and *puja*, (2) it is bitter as poison at the start and in the period of self-discipline, but sweet as nectar in the end, and (3) it springeth out of no outer knowledge or outer objects, but out of clear and unclouded understanding it is born of no *vishaya bhoga* but of the inner serenity of the soul

Sattvic joy is *ananda*, the bliss of self-realisation It is tranquillity of the soul, is wisdom which liberates

And now hear from Me, O Arjuna, the three kinds of joy That in which one, by practice, rejoices and which puteth end to his sorrow,

Which appears like poison at first but in the end is as nectar, and which springs from a clear understanding of the *Atman* (self),— that joy is said to be *sattvic* (pure) [XVIII 36, 37]

The *rajasic* joy is pleasure Sweet as *amrita* (nectar) at first, it

turns bitter as poison it is sense-pleasure Socrates spoke of the "pleasure of wisdom" he meant the "joy of wisdom" The *rajasic* man seeks wisdom in pleasure, and is, soon or late, disappointed pursues pleasure and then finds that pleasure devitalises, resulting in physical depression and moral degeneration He who gorges himself in haste, repents at leisure! Such a man has made desire his deity He spends his time in drinking and revels in the enjoyment of female society, in feasts and luxuries

That which from the contact of the senses and their objects (*vishayas*) is, at first, as nectar, but in the end is like poison,— that *sukha* (pleasure) is accounted *rajasic* (passionate)

[XVIII 38]

Tamasic pleasure is utterly delusive it deadens the soul Its beginning and its end alike are delusions

To the man who drowns himself in *tamasic* pleasure, man is but a natural product,— a kind of matter He is a slave to sloth He is a victim to foolishness, ignorance, confusion, which bewilders the soul

That pleasure which both at first and in its consequence misleads the soul and which arises from sleep, sloth and heedlessness,— that pleasure is declared to be *tamasic* (dark)

[XVIII 39]

[10]

The influence of the three *gunas* is universal not one is free from the three *gunas*

There is not a being, either on earth or again among the gods in heaven, that is freed from the three *gunas* (qualities), born of *prakriti* (nature)

[XVIII 40]

Svabhava or nature of each is really previous *karma* in past incarnation Each one of these four *varnas* (orders) is influenced by the predominant *guna* (quality) in its nature, and works according to that influence Duties of each *varna* are determined by its *guna* in predominance or *svabhava* *I* *varna*-duty is derived from *prakriti* or matter Each *varna* is to its own duty born

Of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, O Arjuna, the activities have been prescribed, according to the qualities

born of their own natures

[XVIII 41]

Sattva prevails in the Brahmin, *rajas* prevails in the Kshatriya, and next to *rajas* are *sattva* and *tamas*, in the Vaishya, *rajas* and *tamas* prevail, *sattva* coming last, in the Shudra, the *tamas* predominates, next to it is *rajas* and next to it, *sattva*

In *Atman*, we all are one,— one in our spiritual essence, one in eternity and in destiny, one in the Homeland of the Spirit But in *prakriti*, we are different and the four *varnas* are made by *prakriti*

All the four are sons of God but treasure is distributed among the four

The actions of the four orders (*varnas*) are due to the three *gunas*, as one or the other of them is more or less but there is no competition between them, no sense of separation, no thought of superior or inferior *Mukti* (liberation) is open to all, if they act without *kama* or desire, in *nishkama bhava*, in a spirit of dedication to the Lord

Svabhava is *sanskaras* due to the *karmas* of earlier *janmas* (births) According to *sanskara* is produced, in the *antah karana*, the predominance of the *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas guna*; and on account of different *gunas*, there are four different *varnas*

Four orders function to keep the life of the nation healthy and strong,— the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, the Shudra

But the heart of the nation is the true Brahmin Not wealth, not armies, not economic planning, but the life of the ordinary citizen makes the nation If he be loose in morals, weak in knowledge, devoid of aspiration, the nation gradually sinks The Brahmin is the teacher of the citizens and keeps them on a noble level of life And if the Brahmin has the seeing power, if the Teacher is, also, the Seer, he saves the nation from many a pitfall

Serenity self-restraint, austerity, purity, forbearance and uprightness, wisdom, knowledge and faith,— these are the duties of the Brahmin, born of his own nature [XVIII 42]

True Brahmins are the seers, true Kshatriyas are the guardians,— the warriors ready to die for peace and progress of the country They are men of prowess, courage they are fearless they are ready to be killed, if that would bring peace No money

tempts them They are unafraid warriors of *dharma* In them is the hope of the race

Bravery, vigour, steadiness, resourcefulness, not fleeing in a battle, generosity, and leadership (the ruler-nature),—these are the duties of a Kshatriya, born of his own nature

[XVIII 43]

Such a warrior was Bhishma When Yuddhishtira says to Krishna — “Master! I am Thy disciple Teach me!” Krishna says to him — “Go to Bhishma ” And Bhishma expounds to him the great truth — “Where Krishna works, there is *dharma* (righteousness) where *dharma* functions, there is victory.”

The true Kshatriya, the warrior of light, builds his life in *dharma* he is bold in battle he faces fire and he has the “ruler-nature” (*ishvara bhava*), and so knows how to control the people

He wields political power, but power does not corrupt him

The Brahmin aims at self-realisation, the Kshatriya at social justice and national advance The Brahmin is a teacher and a seer the Kshatriya is a leader

A Vaishya's duty, nature-sprung, is three-fold — (1) husbandry, cultivation, (2) cattle-raising, cattle-breeding, and (3) trade

A Shudra is a labourer. The duty, nature-sprung, of the labour class is menial work The true Shudra works for all men

The duties and qualities of a Vaishya are of a *rajas-tamas* nature Cultivation of the soil or farming, keeping herds of cattle, and carrying on trade, i.e., buying and selling, are the natural duties of a Vaishya

To serve the first three orders is the duty of him who is a Shudra by nature

Ploughing the soil, protection of cattle, and trade,— are the duties of a Vaishya, born of his own nature Action of the character of service,— is the duty of a Shudra, born of his own nature

[XVIII 44]

Classification of *varnas* or orders is thus based on the natural qualities of a man The four orders are not based on birthright

Is the Gita's classification democratic? I do not know. The basis of democracy is “rationality of a majority” Does the Gita

recommend the modern method of decision by majority of votes? I do not think so. Decision belongs to a few. The majority have their own spheres, their own gifts. If the State is to be built and developed on right lines, each one of the four orders must bring its gifts as contribution to the common weal. There is neither great nor small to him who would be a helper of the State. All work is noble, all efforts are useful. Do not eliminate differences, differences make harmony. He who tills the soil or rears the cattle or carries on a trade or digs the earth is as useful, as necessary as he who fights for the State or governs it, or meditates in a quiet corner. Co-operation of all is needed if the society is to remain healthy and strong. All men have not the same nature nor is every nature equal in its capacities to every other. But all men are necessary for society. A healthy, progressive society aims at a harmony, an integration of all orders.

The Gita is careful to point out that man finds perfection (God-realisation) by being devoted to his own duty. Man's duty is the work which is natural to him.

When he dedicates all his natural actions together with their fruits to the Lord Supreme, he gradually attains to the perfect state.

No matter how humble the task, it becomes a window to glimpse the Supreme, if offered as a sacrifice to Him.

Duty is *svakarma* and *svakarma* leads to *siddhi* (perfection). Cling to your own work,— for which nature has fitted you. Do not shirk your own duty. Toil on, and you will win the Supreme. Toil on! Do your work in the spirit of true *tyaga*, as an offering to the Lord and without thought of reward, and you will attain! Live up to your *svakarma*, and you will win perfection.

Through worship wrought by work, you reach the Supreme. Do your duty as an act of worship to the Lord who prompts all action.

From Him flows the tide of creation and He hath spread in space all that is. In worship, then, vow your work to Him, and attain! Let your work be as the pavement of the Path that leads to God.

Man reacheth perfection, by each being devoted to his own duty Listen thou how perfection is won by him who is devoted to his own duty

He from Whom is the arising (emanation) of all beings and by Whom all this (creation) is pervaded,— by worshipping Him through doing his own duty, doth man attain perfection

[XVIII 45, 46]

Don't neglect your duty for any other task, however superior it may seem And your duty is that in which your *svabhava*,— nature,— finds expression Let nature work in you and it will be well with you Never abandon your own duty Let the shoemaker mind his work and not abandon it for the work of a politician So will he be led on to *moksha* (liberation) In doing his duty, however humble, he will not be bound by action his work will be as no-work And an humble shopkeeper may live nearer the true life than a famous statesman

Do not abandon your duty, though its performance be imperfect, as indeed it must be every work is tainted with some blemish, some shortcoming, as new-kindled fire is wrapped in smoke For some time, indeed, every task will be done imperfectly Go on with it ! Do not renounce it for another which you may for sometime, indeed, do better Action is always defective, in the beginning For your natural duty is yours, according to your nature and your qualities Go on doing your duty, however imperfectly, at the start! So will you purify your heart and draw nearer to the Divine Source

Better is one's own *dharma*, though devoid of merits, than the well-executed *dharma* of another He who doeth the *dharma* (duty), ordained by his own nature (*svabhava*), incurreth not sin

Innate duty, O Arjuna, though defective, should not be abandoned For all undertakings are clouded by defects, as fire is beclouded by smoke

[XVIII 47, 48]

[11]

Through action is reached the perfection of actionlessness This perfection is freedom,— from bondage of *karma* This perfection is God-realisation

Here are the three stages in the ascent to perfection — (1) In the first stage, the man renounces his self, ego, “I” (2) In the second stage, he renounces all fruits of action (3) In the third stage, he abandons all idea of a sense of duty he renounces all his *karma*. He is self-mastered he attains the power of perfect actionlessness. He reaches union with Brahman, the Supreme Spirit, who is beyond all action.

He whose *buddhi* (understanding) is everywhere unattached, who has subdued his self, whose desire has fled,— he goeth by renunciation to the Supreme Perfection named *naishkarmya* (freedom from work) [XVIII 49]

In this *sloka*, *sanyasa* (renunciation) is used as equivalent to *tyaga* (abandonment of desire)

Naishkarmya is not *akarma*, *naishkarmya* is absence of actions which create bonds

[12]

Sri Krishna now indicates to Arjuna how the aspirant, after practise or *abhyasa* of selfless *karma*, attains to Brahman, the realisation of the Self. The different stages in self-realisation are as follows —

(1) The first stage is to attain knowledge through selfless *karma*

(2) Then follows devotional service unto the Lord

In attaining knowledge through selfless *karma*, the aspirant (1) develops pure understanding and pure will, free from delusions, and so does not identify his body with the *Atman*, (2) turns away from all sense-enjoyment of sound, sight and touch, (3) learns self-control and so rises above earthly likes and dislikes, love and hate, (4) grows in love of solitude and subjective retirement, (5) eats but little and only light, *sattvic* foods, sleeps and talks but little, (6) is restrained in body, mind and tongue, (7) is absorbed in meditation on Truth, on God or *Soham*, (8) eradicates passion and prejudice and takes refuge in desirelessness, detachment (*vairagya*), (9) is free from ambition, mineness, vanity, force, pride, ego-sense, lust and anger, and (10) is peaceful, tranquil of heart,— kind, unselfish, mild,

compassionate.

Thus qualified, the aspirant is able to realise Brahman, to become one with the Eternal, one with his own True Self. He is ready for oneness with Brahman. He becomes the Supreme Spirit, God in God!

Endowed with pure understanding, firmly controlling himself, turning away from sound and other objects of sense, and casting aside attraction (*raga*) and aversion (*dvesha*),

Dwelling in solitude, eating but little, controlling speech, body and mind, ever absorbed in the yoga of meditation, taking refuge in dispassion,

Casting aside "mineness", force (violence), arrogance, desire (lust), possession, selfless, and peaceful,— he is fit to become one with Brahman [XVIII 51-53]

The aspirant, who is thus transformed to Brahman, grieves for naught and longs for naught. His sheaths have grown pure. He is freed from bondage. He is happy in himself. He has a calm vision. And of equal heart to all that lives, his love, devotion, is supreme to Me,— the All-Self. his *bhakti* transcends the three qualities of *maya*.

His *bhakti* truly begins after God-realisation. Thus, after winning Brahman, the Spirit, he is united in devotion with Krishna.

Having become one with Brahman, serene in the spirit, he grieveth not, nor desireth. Regarding all beings as alike, he obtaineth supreme devotion unto Me [XVIII 54]

To become Brahman is to love Krishna. to love Krishna is to know Him, how wonderful He is, what is His real Nature, what are His transcendental qualities and deeds. And to know is to enter into His Life. And this knowledge cometh through selfless *karma-yoga*.

By devotion he knoweth Me, what My measure is and who I am in essence; then, having known Me in essence, he forthwith entereth into That, the Supreme [XVIII 55]

So the climax, the consummation of the realisation is love, is *bhakti*, *prema*. To "enter into the Lord" does not mean "self-annihilation" — it means the freedom of the *jiva*, the soul, from

his earthly bondages, and attainment of his transcendental Nature, which is a likeness, *rupa*, of the Divine Self, the Real Self of Krishna To "enter into the Lord" is to become His Image, His Likeness And as He is Love, to enter into Him is to love Eternal Love unendingly

To love Krishna is to know Him, His innermost Nature, The truth that He is Through this Knowledge-Love, the soul enters into His Being

Through loving devotion, the soul dwells in Krishna until death and eternally after death

[13]

Krishna sums up His doctrine of *karma*, *gnana* and *bhakti* Krishna's *bhakta* need not fight shy of *karma* Let him do what work he will, his *bhakti* and Krishna's grace will break all bonds of *Karma*

The *bhakta* takes refuge in the Lord, and so converts *kamyā* into *nishkama karma* Though ever at work, in every way, the *jiva*, through *bhakti* and grace, dwells at perfect rest in Krishna's eternal State For all he does is offered to Him in utter surrender His Grace is upon him, and he finds, and dwells in, the Eternal

Doing continually all actions whatsoever, taking refuge in Me, by My Grace he obtaineth the eternal, undying abode
[XVIII 56]

This, then, is the triple thought emphasised — (1) By selfless *karma-yoga* is the *jiva* led on to knowledge or *gnana* (2) By *gnana-yoga* does he advance to *bhakti* (3) By *bhakti*, pure *bhakti*, *prema*, he enters into Krishna

By a triple process may the Lord be worshipped — (1) *nishkama karma*, selfless activity, (2) *sarnagati*, taking shelter in the Lord, even with a selfish motive, dedicating all secular duties to Him, and (3) *prema-bhakti*, love divine

Arjuna! mentally resign all thy actions to Me, and turn thy mind and heart to Me in all thy activities

Think mentally that you are no more than an agent of God, regarding Him as the one Supreme End, and even fix your mind

on Him, Practise the *buddhi-yoga*, the yoga of equanimity or wisdom, not the yoga called *hatha-yoga*, and so despise not the world but live in it, till your *karma* is exhausted and drops down of its own accord, as falls a wreath of flowers from off the neck of an elephant

Be one with the Lord in will, in heart, in consciousness

Surrendering in thought all action to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme, taking refuge in *buddhi-yoga*, the yoga of discrimination, do thou fix thy thought ever on Me

[XVIII 57]

The *jiva* must meditate on Krishna and lose the thought of individual agency He who renounces his ego, him the grace of Krishna helps on to success But he who, in self-conceit, listens not to Krishna,— he shall perish

Thinking on Me, thou shalt cross over all obstacles by My Grace But if, from egoism, thou wilt not listen (to Me), thou shalt perish

[XVIII 58]

Salvation or self-destruction,— the choice is yours If you choose salvation, follow Krishna if you choose destruction, trust yourself! You may defy the Lord but you cannot long resist the Will Divine You will fall you will perish!

If you wrongly identify yourself with your body and your mind and cling to your perverted “ego” and think yourself to be the “doer” or “master” of what happens in the world, then you will fall And drawn away from the Divine Source, you will bring ruin upon yourself Pride goeth before a fall! In union with the Lord is success and achievement

The fall of the *jiva* is due to disobedience or revolt against God’s Will The *jiva*’s spiritual evolution is retarded this is his fall

You may, in your vanity, say ever so much — “I will not fight!” Your own nature will drive you to the act For you yourself have created the *karma* that binds you you are helpless in its power And you will do that very thing which your vanity would not The nature of the *Kshatriya* will make thee fight! The natural instincts thou wilt not overpower

If, entrenched in egoism, thou thinkest, “I will not fight”,

know that thy resolve is vain. Nature will constrain thee!

O Arjuna, bound by thine own acts, born of thine own nature,— that which, through delusion, thou wishest not to do, even that helplessly thou shalt perform [XVIII 59, 60]

The right way to evolve spiritually is to give the heart to God. Then the *karmas* will gradually adjust themselves and may assume a devotional character. Even a *yogi* cannot at once rise above his own nature.

“Bound by thy own *karmas*, born of thine own nature” this is not the paralysis of initiative but the cosmic sense of continuity. You cannot shirk what nature has traced for you. You will do involuntarily! *Karma* must be done under *prakṛiti*’s constraint. Your work was born when you were born, and you are bound to do it.

The Lord, who is in the heart of every thing created, whirls all creatures round and round,— held fast on His wheel of *maya*.

A wire-puller pulls the puppets from behind the screen by wires. So *maya* (God’s power) pulls, drives the *jivas*, imprisoned in gross bodies, to dance as *maya* wills, in conformity with the dictation of the Lord within. He is the Inner Monitor. Arjuna, He propels thy *prakṛiti* (natural proclivity) to stimulate thee to fight as a result of thy *karmas* in previous births. The Efficient Cause is the Lord seated within. *Maya* is the natural cause. The *jivas* are held on the wheel of *maya* and made to dance this way or that as puppets. *Prakṛiti* makes each one as a puppet to play his part. As puppets the *jivas* dance and are in bondage. So all creatures are compelled to work by the magic-machine of *maya*.

In the universal wheel of Time, the *Ishvara*, the Lord, the Master, causes the destined deeds of *karma* to be performed. All beings revolve as though mounted on a potter’s wheel. The Master is the Regulator, not blind Fate or Chance.

The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, causing them to revolve by *maya* (His power), as if they were mounted on a machine [XVIII 61]

Take refuge utterly in the Lord. Do not trust your lower self, which expresses itself in ambition, desire, etc. By His grace,— contacting with the Supreme Being and transformed into His likeness, an Image of the Infinite,— you will gain the Supreme.

Peace, your Eternal Home

Flee unto Him for shelter with all being, O Arjuna! By His grace thou shalt obtain Supreme Peace,— the Eternal Abode

Thus hath wisdom, more secret than secrecy itself, been declared to thee by Me Reflect on it fully and do as thou choosest [XVIII 62, 63]

Here, then, is Krishna's appeal to Arjuna Carefully consider what has been told you, and then act as you will!

The knowledge of the realisation of Brahman through selfless *karma* is a secret And another secret is regarding Krishna, the Indwelling Monitor, who regulates and whose *maya* makes us dance as puppets Take refuge, then, in Krishna

The wisdom is profound, but feel free to accept it or not

Listen thou again to My supreme word, the most secret of all Well-beloved art thou of Me, therefore shall I speak for thy good [XVIII 64]

In the "supreme word" is the essence of the Gita it is the essence of yoga

Fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, prostrate thyself before Me So shalt thou come to Me I pledge thee My truth, thou art dear to me! [XVIII 65]

Arjuna is very dear to Krishna So the Lord tells Arjuna about this pure *bhakti* By giving your whole heart to Krishna, by loving and adoring Him, worshipping Him always, and bowing to Him in reverence, you will find Him,— the Lord of life and destiny!

Mind, heart, sacrifice, reverence,— must all be directed to Krishna. Arjuna must be a true *yogi* and so must be God-minded, devoted to Him, working for Him, bowing down to God alone, not the world

Abandoning all duties, come unto Me alone for shelter Grieve not! I shall liberate thee from all sins [XVIII 66]

In this *sloka* is indicated the supreme secret which Krishna indicates to His beloved disciple and which is the spiritual wisdom of the Sages of India

"Abandon all *dharmas*" enjoined by the *shastras*, i.e. do not waste time in idle discussions regarding systems of caste and

stations of life and rigid austerities, etc., and subtle points of *dharma-shastras* in metaphysic and ethics Lay down all duties in Me,— your Refuge The true *jignasu* (seeker) must surrender his heart and soul to God And God will liberate the *jignasu* from sins or limitations Arjuna must not grieve for all duties are relative I shall save you through *bhakti*, devotion

In the lower stage to which the *jiva* has fallen, he has to conform to physical, mental and moral duties, to laws, customs, usages, to austerities, to techniques of *dhyana* (meditation), etc But he has no further need of these duties, etc., when, through *bhakti*, his normal health is recovered Be not a slave to duties, to virtues, to principles

Take refuge or shelter in the Eternal Beauty and Supreme Joy of Krishna through *bhakti* or love divine and transcend duties

Bhakti, then, is the most esoteric principle, and *prema* or love is the secret of secrets, the final aim of all *jivas* Be a *bhakta*, Arjuna! Take shelter in His Love! *Bhakti*, surrender, is the way, the surest way to the Lord Go to Him naked, in unreserved surrender

The School of Ramanuja regards this verse as the *carama sloka*, the final verse, the summing up of the Gita

Abandon set duties how? Work, but in abandonment to Krishna as the Refuge

This holy truth of the Gita must not be told to those who are given up to worldly pleasures, who lack in devotion, who do not serve the Supreme Lord and His creatures, not to those who cavil at spiritual ideals and are indifferent to the Teacher and despise Krishna

The Gita is not to be taught to the sensuous and the scoffers Do not cast pearls before the swine Teach the Gita only to those who have the qualifications of discipline, devotion and service Others will not understand the Teaching, will even misunderstand it and, by misusing it, do more harm than good

Never is this to be spoken by thee to anyone who is not austere in life, nor to one without devotion nor to one who desireth not to listen, nor yet to him who speaketh ill of Me

[XVIII 67]

The services of him who, unselfishly and reverently, teaches the divine wisdom of the Gita to others are the greatest, for he helps others to cross the *sansara* and reach the Eternal Home

He who declares this supreme secret to My devotees, showing the highest devotion for Me,— he, without doubt, shall come to Me

Nor is there any among men who does dearer service to Me than he Nor shall there be another dearer to Me on earth than he [XVIII 68, 69]

A study of this supreme classic is worship of God Who studies the Gita gives to the supreme Truth a rich offering

And he who shall study this sacred dialogue of ours, by him shall I be worshipped with the sacrifice of knowledge So I hold [XVIII 70]

He who merely hears this great classic with faith, he, in the course of time, becomes a *mukta*, obtains freedom,— not from rebirth but from sins which stand in the way of *bhakti* or devotion When freed from the body, such a man obtains the happy worlds of men of holy deeds

The Gita is a Scripture which destroys delusion Doubt destroys Listen to the Gita! You will reach the heaven of the righteous.

And the man who, full of faith and without scoffing, merely heareth it, even he, freed (from evil), shall obtain the radiant worlds of the righteous [XVIII 71]

In the next *sloka*, Krishna asks Arjuna whether His teaching has destroyed his doubts

Has this been heard by thee, O Arjuna, with one-pointed mind? Has thy *moha* (delusion), caused by *agnana* (ignorance), been destroyed, O Arjuna? [XVIII 72]

Arjuna says —

Destroyed is my delusion I have gained recognition through Thy grace, O Krishna! I am firm, my doubts have fled I shall act according to Thy word [XVIII 73]

At last, Arjuna is ready to do the bidding of his Master Arjuna's doubts are ended, and his mind stands firm Light has

come to him *smṛiti*, recognition, is come to him of the true nature of the *Ātman*, of the knowledge of essential Truth Remembrance of the holy wisdom now dawns upon him The veil of illusion is removed He has recovered lost memory, and now remembers that a *jīva* is His eternal servant A *jīva*-soul's highest place is at His holy Feet a *jīva*'s highest wisdom is surrender to the Divine Spirit Arjuna has received wisdom and says — "I will now obey!"

So it ever is When the *jīva* knows,— his egoism gone, illusions destroyed, doubts dispelled,— he hears the small voice of God within him and acts, as an instrument of God

[15]

In the concluding section, Sanjaya says to King Dhritarashtra —

Thus I heard this marvellous dialogue of Vasudeva (Krishna) and the great-souled Partha (Arjuna), causing my hair to stand on end [XVIII 74]

Sanjaya speaks these words to the blind King Dhritarashtra Sanjaya says, he has repeated to the King the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, as he heard it

Sanjaya says he heard the Gita from the very lips of Krishna He heard the Gita not with these earthly ears but, by the mystic grace of Vyasa, he learnt the yoga supreme from the Master of Yoga!

By the grace of Vyasa, I heard this supreme secret, this yoga taught by Krishna Himself, the Lord of Yoga,— speaking before me [XVIII 75]

As Sanjaya remembers the sacred and wonderful truths that Krishna told to Arjuna, Sanjaya rejoices, again and again

Remembering, remembering this marvellous and holy dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, O King, I thrill with joy, again and again!

Remembering, remembering, also, that most marvellous form of Krishna, great is my wonder, O King, and I thrill with joy, again and again! [XVIII 76, 77]

How wondrous and sweet the Form of Śrī Krishna! My joy is

limitless it increases at every moment

Wherever is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, wherever is Arjuna, the archer, assured are there prosperity, victory, welfare and *neeti* (righteousness or morality) [XVIII 78]

Krishna represents yoga Arjuna represents energy In the union of the two is victory, welfare, prosperity, progress and righteousness

Sri Krishnarpanam astu

Shubham Bhavatu

To the Blessed Krishna be homage!

May there be happiness everywhere!

Thus the Bhagavad Gita-Upanishad hath ending

PEACE BE TO ALL BEINGS!

